

Disney

THEY DREW AS THEY PLEASED

THE HIDDEN ART *of* DISNEY'S GOLDEN AGE

THE 1930S



BY Didier Ghez

FOREWORD BY Pete Docter



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CHRONICLE BOOKS
SAN FRANCISCO



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FRONT COVER IMAGE: Gustaf Tenggren
ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character studies for
Alice in Wonderland. Courtesy: Matt Crandall.

*To the three fairies who gave birth to my golden age:
my grandmother, Simone Naman; my mother,
Yvette Naman-Ghez; and my wife, Rita Holanda Ghez*





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Character studies for *The Fox Hunt* (1958),
by Ferdinand Horvath.

FOREWORD

A concept artist at Disney in the 1940s. It seems like a dream job, doesn't it? No rules, no preexisting styles to follow, working alongside some of the best artists in the world. Just sit all day in a comfortable office . . . and draw.

YET MOST WHO ACHIEVED this enviable position only lasted a few years. They got frustrated, anxious, insecure, and burned out. Why? What made this dream job so difficult?

For starters, there is that blank piece of paper staring up at you. What at first seems like freedom can end up overwhelming in its infinite possibilities. Inspiration doesn't always arrive on a schedule, but the deadlines don't change. Then too, consider the audience for whom you're producing: whatever you produce has to surprise, delight, and inspire the world's best artists and storytellers—including Walt Disney himself. No pressure, right?

Given all these requirements, there were but a small number of artists up to this task. Few made it to this position directly; they were usually brought up through the ranks, hand-selected by Walt. What was he looking for? What qualities did it take to be a successful concept artist?²⁰

They must draw well, of course. But an artist is more than a talented draftsman. Concept artists must be independent and unique, more interested in blazing their own trail than following others. Their visual style should be distinctive. They need to be able to observe thousands of details from life around them, filter, interpret, and then commit these ideas to paper in a way that would make others laugh or cry. Their work reflected the mind of the artist who made it, showing their personality and taste. It's surprising how often a drawing will look like the artist—even when the drawing isn't of a person. Their artwork is a reflection of the individual and their life experiences. If you want unique art, you'll find it takes a unique person to produce it.

In addition, it takes a quiet and reflective person to pick up on the nuances and subtleties of human behavior; someone who is sensitive and deeply attuned to the world around them. Often these people are shy introverts, content to sit outside the party and observe rather than be an active part of it.

Imagine what happens when you put this unique, sensitive, independent person into a factory setting—for that largely describes an animation studio. The days are regimented, the hours long, and the deadlines never stop. And of course, one's work is always under scrutiny, subject to others' tastes and opinion. Walt was not known for his soft-handed approach, and he wasn't shy about speaking up when something didn't please him. (He was, after all, paying the bills.)

Ironically, in many ways the Disney Studio system may have unwittingly squashed the very qualities it looked for in the concept artist to begin with. Being some of the very first artists to be placed in this newly minted "concept artist" position, Albert Hurter, Ferdinand Horvarth, Gustaf Tenggren, and Bianca Majolie were to find out first-hand how difficult the position could be. In many ways, the real surprise is that they lasted at the Studio as long as they did.

Concept artists are unlikely mercenaries. Hired to discover ideas, jokes, characters, and environments, their trailblazing work is never seen directly by the film-going audience. Unexpectedly, thanks to this volume, the art of four exemplary members of the Walt Disney Studio in the 1930s has a second chance to do what it was designed to do: inspire.

—PETE DOCTER



PREFACE

The 1930s was the decade of the Walt Disney Studio's Golden Age. They were also the decade of the Great Depression. Unemployed artists flocked to the Disney Studio and the animation jobs that were among the only reliable openings at the time.

Walt had the opportunity to pick the best among them.

AS A RESULT, many of the most gifted American and foreign artists joined Disney in the '30s to work on story, design, layouts, backgrounds, and animation. The most original, the most creative, the most imaginative of them were challenged by Walt to create imaginative works of art, to establish character and scene designs, to inspire their fellow artists. By their very nature those pieces of preproduction art never made it to the screen, though the characters and scenes that audiences have come to love sprang to life from these early ideas and designs.

I first became aware of the beauty and endless creativity of Disney's concept artwork through the books *He Drew as He Pleased* (1948) by Albert Hurter and the seminal *Before the Animation Begins* (1996) by John Canemaker. Looking at concept art allowed me to become aware of the thousands of creative ideas and designs that the Disney artists explored before settling on the ones that made it to the screen. It revealed a critical, and often hidden, part of Disney history whose richness was almost overwhelming. I was hooked, and I knew I needed to try to unearth much more of this art for myself and others to enjoy. More specifically, I wanted to delve into the lives and work of artists who, while they played key roles in Disney's productions, have been largely overlooked in the more popular histories and art books.

For this volume, I chose to include Albert Hurter, Ferdinand Horvath, Gustaf Tenggren, and Bianca Majolie. These are each

unique and highly creative individuals who had a major impact on the second decade of the Disney Studio. Their stories and art showcase the incredible explosion of inspiration and ideas that was occurring in animation at that time, as well as the consequences of working in such a competitive, high-pressure environment. In future volumes I will also mostly shy away from artists like Joe Grant and Mary Blair, who have been widely discussed, in order to focus on the likes of Johnny Walbridge, Walt Scott, and John Parr Miller, whose concept sketches are particularly striking but have been almost completely overlooked.

As much as possible, my plan is to include in these books artwork that has never been released before. There is so much from these artists—and many others—that lies in the files and boxes of Disney's Animation Research Library and the Walt Disney Archives. These institutions preserve close to sixty-five million pieces of art. Needless to say, this is both exhilarating and daunting. The present volume contains countless new discoveries: from early Jiminy Cricket designs by Albert Hurter to drawings by Gustaf Tenggren for "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" and the abandoned Silly Symphony *Ballet des Fleurs*. The search for these treasures was not always smooth. To make matters more difficult, artists working at Disney mostly did not sign their creations, and it is often difficult to attribute pieces of art to a specific individual. In addition, some of the most beautiful concept sketches

and paintings were highly coveted and ended up in private collections. As a result, I could not always locate all the documents I would have wanted: Where are the concept drawings by Gustaf Tenggren from *The Wind in the Willows*? Where are the concept sketches of *The Nativity* by Bianca Majolie, or those by Ferdinand Horvath from *Little Hiawatha* or *Brave Little Tailor*? We will have to keep looking.

The lives of Walt's first concept artists were all dramatic ones. As much as possible I have attempted to tell the story of these artists in their own words, or through the testimonies of their colleagues, by unearthing rare interviews, autobiographies, surviving correspondence, and diaries. Many new and critically important documents about them have surfaced since John Canemaker wrote *Before the Animation Begins*—including the personal diaries and early correspondence of Ferdinand Horvath—and I used those to tread on paths that John did not explore in 1996. If the artists discussed in the present book fascinate you as much as they fascinate me, I strongly encourage you to try to locate a copy of John's book to get the full picture, since the two books complement each other.

In the meantime, I hope the book you are currently reading will soon allow you to share my enthusiasm for the inspiring talent of these four pioneers.

—DIDIER GHEZ

RIGHT: Character study for *Ballet des Fleurs* (1955–56), by Ferdinand Horvath.





ABOVE LEFT: Caricatures of Disney artists
Hain Lusk, Joe Grant, and Gustaf Tenggren by
Ferdinand Horvath. Courtesy: Lusiano Bernatus.

ABOVE RIGHT: The first Disney librarian, Helen
DeForce Ludwig in the Disney Studio library.



INSPIRED!

INSPIRATION FOLLOWS SINUOUS PATHS. Paintings created by Disney artist Kay Nielsen in the 1930s for *The Little Mermaid* were dug up fifty years later when the movie was finally produced by the Walt Disney Studio. The 1950s concept drawings from Disney's art director Mary Blair were so striking that close to sixty years later they strongly influenced the art direction of the Pixar feature *Up*. Sketches by Albert Hurter were still studied by his fellow Disney artists more than a decade after his death.

But how do you keep hundreds of tremendously talented artists inspired? How do you keep creating cartoons which are better than what came before? How do you build a studio that in less than ten years goes from the charming *Steamboat Willie* (1928) to the feature-length masterpiece *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)?

Those are the challenges that Walt Disney was facing in the 1930s. He knew that he had recruited the best artists from all over the world—his early successes, his obvious genius, and the Great Depression had helped. He knew that personality animation—in which the animated characters on the screen were believable and “alive”—was the way to go, rather than the bread and butter of his competitors: shallow characters and slapstick gags strung together. He knew that the Story Department, the nucleus of which he had established in 1931, was at the heart of his organization. But he also realized that none of this would be enough if his artists did not find that most elusive of all gems: inspiration.

Walt's personality helped, of course. After all, he was a master storyteller and could fire up the creativity of his artists at will. “Along with his talents,” explained animator Ward Kimball, “he had this personality that whatever he was enthused about, you would be enthused about. He was able to project his visions to other people who were able to fulfill them for him.”¹ But, as the Studio grew, as animation became an art in itself and as stories became more elaborate, Walt knew that he needed to build tools to feed his artists' inspiration and to allow them to grow artistically and creatively. He tried numerous tactics over the next few years.

In late 1929, Walt had struck a deal with the Chouinard Art Institute, a school in downtown Los Angeles, to admit his employees to Friday-night classes. They would become better artists. But this didn't address the issue of inspiration.

In April 1933, Dr. Boris V. Morkovin from the University of Southern California opened a ten-part lecture series at the Studio. “Walt invited him to psychoanalyze cartoons and to teach the psychology of the animated cartoon to the Studio artists,” explained Disney producer Don Hahn. “His lectures pushed the importance of narrative over gags, and taught that stories should center around strong characters—but to the artists all this talk was all self-evident and mind-numbing.”²

Another idea devised by Walt was a huge “gag file,” which featured drawers upon drawers filled to the brim with thousands



Disney's first concept artist, Albert Hurter and story artist Joe Grant look at some of Hurter's designs.



of prewritten gags, and which the Studio bought from publisher Hal Horne in August 1936. Unsurprisingly, the concept of "imported gags" met with strong resistance from Disney's story men. Two months later, on October 30, 1936, Disney writer Dorothy Ann Blank—who had joined the Studio to help its artists use the gag file—sent a memo to Walt in answer to his frustrations:

I am sorry I do not seem to have any concrete plan we could follow to get people in the Studio in the habit of using the gag file. It seems to me it will be a gradual process, since the fact that *written* gags, or dialogue, can suggest picture ideas and situations can only be proven by practice. Nobody believes the file (particularly the written gags) can be useful in this way until he finds himself getting inspiration and realizing that it came from something he read in the file. I know this from my own experience. . . .

I myself believe the file should never be used in preliminary work on stories, or on early gags. But when a picture gets to the stage where ideas and gags are lacking, it should be a valuable source of ideas, or at least, stimulation. It is not the *easy* way to get anything—truly original ideas come much more easily, as we all know. But when a picture or story is in crying need of resuscitation, there is *no* way of getting ideas which is easy. At this point I believe going through a bunch of related gags might very easily remove snags or upset preconceived notions which may be obscuring a fresh viewpoint, and this alone might make it worthwhile doing.³



1926 v HOMERIC

ABOVE LEFT: Character studies by Albert Hurter for the abandoned short *The Frog Who Would A-Wooing Go* (1935).

ABOVE RIGHT: Disney's second concept artist, Ferdinand Horvath, in 1926, aboard the *Homeric*. Courtesy: Martin Collins.

The gag file was stored in the Disney Studio library; and, while the Disney artists did not embrace the file, they loved the library itself. From its founding in 1930 up until 1935, the library was strictly a catch-as-catch-can affair. It consisted of approximately two hundred indiscriminate books locked up in a case. If anyone wanted one, they hunted up a secretary who wasn't too busy, sent her to trail down the key, and had her open up the case.⁴ Some of the first books bought by the Studio in the early '30s included versions of *Pinocchio*, *Bambi*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Cinderella*, and *The Road to Oz*—all of which would be adapted at



some point by Disney as animated features or TV specials, often many years later. By February 8, 1934, when those books were first catalogued, in addition to classics of children's literature the Disney library also contained more "serious" volumes like *Paradise Lost*, *Dante's Inferno*, or even *Jewish Fairy Tales and Stories*. Also of note were several volumes by artist Johnny Gruelle, whose mice may have influenced the initial design of Mickey, and books illustrated by John Gee and Holling C. Holling, two artists who, a few years later, would actually be hired by Walt.⁵

On July 1, 1935, Disney hired a trained librarian, Helen DeForce Ludwig, who, assisted by Verlaine Rowen and Carol Jackson, helped the library's collection grow to more than two

thousand volumes.⁶ The daily routine of the librarians was anything but boring. "For the library staff of Walt Disney's studio," wrote Disney publicist Janet Martin in 1939, "it is nothing more than regular routine to receive such strange requests as: 'Get me a close-up of a knothole!' 'Where can I get a drawing of a whale's stomach?' 'Have you anything listed on people walking under water?'"⁷

The inflection point in the growth of the Disney library came after Walt Disney's trip to Europe in 1935, when he bought more than three hundred books for the library. Walt's selection represented a true who's who of European illustrators at the time, and to say that he was eclectic in his interests is an understatement.⁸

ABOVE: Art direction meeting for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. From left to right are the Disney artists: Unknown, Hugh Henries, Walt Disney, Unknown, Tom Codrick, Mique Nelson, Charles Philippi, Gustaf Tenggren, Ken Anderson, and Albert Hutter. Courtesy: Paul F. Anderson.

Those books and other material inspired Disney's artists and Walt himself. A few months after the trip, Walt sent a long memo to Ted Sears, the head of his Story Department. That memo gives a clear sense of the many creative directions that were being explored at one single time by Walt and his team.

"Some of those little books which I brought back with me from Europe have very fascinating illustrations of little people, bees and small insects who live in mushrooms, pumpkins, etc. This quaint atmosphere fascinates me and I was trying to think how we could build some little story that would incorporate all of those cute little characters. Bianca Majoli [sic] has been working on this, but she hasn't been able to develop anything concrete."

In this seminal memo, Walt went on to describe the countless ideas he had for animated adaptations of *Tom Thumb*, *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod*, *Little Boy Blue*, *Punch and Judy*, *Puss in Boots*, *The House That Jack Built*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Reynard the Fox*, *Fairy Queen*, *The Big Frog and the Little Puddle*, *Timid Little Bear*, *Mother Goose*, *The Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe*, *Humpty Dumpty*, a burlesque of *Tarzan* with Mickey as the ape man, a Silly Symphony titled *Ballet des Fleurs*, and an original idea called *The Hollywoods* featuring Mickey, Goofy, and Donald Duck.⁸

However, Walt realized intuitively, almost from the start, that he needed even more than great story ideas, the gag file, the Studio library, the Training Program or the conferences of Morkovin to generate ongoing creative sparks and to inspire his team.

Walt knew that he needed to let his artists explore new visual ideas—artistic styles that were not of direct use to the projects at hand, character designs too fanciful to be practical, blue sky concepts that were years ahead of their time. And so, in the '30s, Walt gave some of his best artists—all members of the Story Department—the sole mission of inspiring their colleagues.

Most of these early Disney concept artists came from Europe, bringing to the Studio a new artistic sensibility that Walt enjoyed, intuitively at first, then more consciously after his 1935 trip to Europe. They also brought with them gifts and experiences that were unique to them as artists. Albert Hurter had been an animator, Ferdinand Horvath and Gustaf Tenggren were famous book illustrators, Bianca Majolie had tried her hand at comic strips. Most importantly, Walt saw that they all had the spark he was looking for. They were tasked with exploring the visual possibilities of the stories that flowed through the Story Department.

They ended up inspiring their fellow artists. They inspired Walt himself. They inspire us to this day.





1

ALBERT HURTER

*"That impenetrable mind of his was never easily figured out, but he was a most lovable character when you knew him. His imagination was rare and unique."*¹⁰

—WALT DISNEY





RARE AND UNIQUE INDEED. While working at the Disney Studio, Hurter was imagination incarnate. His drawings—thousands and thousands of them—seem to have been conjured by an army of dreamers gone cuckoo. Hurter's range was endless and almost overwhelming, going from a very insect-like Jiminy Cricket who could have been the main protagonist in *The Metamorphosis* of Kafka to Keith Haring-esque marshmallow characters for the short *The Cookie Carnival*, from bizarre mechanical creatures whose impossible perspectives could have been created by M. C. Escher to totally abstract drawings. Even in a studio that employed the best artists of the country and from abroad, Hurter really stood out. "He was a genius," artist Joe Grant once noted, in awe. "He had a cigar in his left hand, a magic wand in his right hand."¹¹ He was the first of Disney's concept artists.

A SWISS NATIVE IN THE NEW WORLD

Albert Hurter was born on May 11, 1883, in Zurich, Switzerland. His father was a drawing teacher of mechanical engineering. On April 6, 1903, at almost twenty years old, Albert left Zurich for Berlin to study art and architecture. He returned home in 1910, then, a few years later, spent some time in Paris.¹² In August 1914, Albert decided to come to America to avoid the chaos of the war.¹³ His ship reached Ellis Island on August 24, 1914, a month after the start of World War I.¹⁴

Did Hurter immediately join some of the pioneers of animation, the Canadian Raoul Barré and the American Bill Nolan, who had just set up their studio in New York in 1914? He might have. What is certain is that by 1916 he was working in New York for Barré-Bowers, the recently formed partnership between Raoul Barré and Charles Bowers, which was producing the rather primitive *Mutt and Jeff* cartoons. At Barré-Bowers, Hurter worked with artists like Burt Gillett, Ted Sears, Richard

"Dick" Huemer, I. Klein, and George Stallings, who would all later move to California and be employed by Disney.¹⁵

Hurter's artistic skills impressed his new colleagues. "Around 1918, Albert Hurter had to draw an American flag," remembered Dick Huemer. "He looked out the window, saw a flag, and wonder of wonders, he actually copied the movement—studied it and copied it. Something which nobody had done before! If you had done a flag before, you would take three drawings and have it merely sort of vibrate. But he analysed the action, and its folds, etcetera. And when this scene came out, we thought, 'This is the end! The living end! This is the greatest!' In other words, we weren't blind to improvement. He was such a magnificent artist!"¹⁶

"When some realistic animation was required," added I. Klein, "it was done by Hurter. Despite the fact that animation was still a new art or profession at this time, it had already become set in rigid patterns as to how to animate a walk, a run and other forms of motion. The reason for this I believe was that the animators had little or no real art training so that their draftsmanship was very limited. They learned a series of set formulas at which they became proficient according to their individual abilities. Hurter was an exception. His greater ability as a draftsman gave him wider scope."¹⁷

In addition to being a skilled artist, Hurter was also a very quirky man, as quickly became apparent to his colleagues. "There was no clock in the studio," recalled I. Klein years later. "There were no bells or other signals to tell us when it was lunch time or quitting time. But everyone got up promptly at twelve o'clock and at six in the evening. It did not take me long to catch on. The timing signal came from Albert Hurter. Albert would look at his watch, put it back into his vest pocket, reach for his hat and coat and head for the door. Then a scraping of chairs, shuffling of feet and the studio would be emptied. Albert Hurter's watch was always correct and Albert was always prompt."¹⁸

OPPOSITE: Albert Hurter working on the Silly Symphony *Peculiar Penguins* (1934).

GOING WEST

Hurter did not settle down in New York. The story of his departure, in true quirky style, is best told, again, by his colleague I. Klein:

I strolled up to Grand Central station on East 42nd Street to take the subway uptown. As I was walking through the huge station, I heard my name called. I turned. There stood Albert Hurter. I was startled to say the least. What was Albert Hurter doing downtown on a workday at ten in the morning? He greeted me by saying, 'Do you know what has happened?' My heart sank. The studio must have burned down during the night. He answered his own question. 'I am going to California now. I sat up all night thinking should I go or not go. I decided I should.' He reached into his pocket and pulled out his California train ticket. It was an accordion-folded string of tickets which unfolded from his hand down to the ground. 'Tell Mr. Bowers I am sorry to leave him without notice. Say goodbye to him and everybody.'¹⁹

Having followed Horace Greeley's famous advice ("Go west, young man"), Hurter was still restless. He traveled to Mexico and the Southwest, since the desert and Native Americans fascinated him. And he eventually arrived in Los Angeles, where he developed a modest commercial art studio, occasionally turning

his hand to bits of animation for Hollywood producers.²⁰ In 1925 he also illustrated a small book, *Litany of American Holiday Prayer* by Elwood Lloyd.

By the late '20s Hurter was working in Los Angeles for marketer Randolph Van Nostrand, who described those early years in a letter to Walt Disney in 1953:

[He] was living in one room in the old Hotel Westminster on the corner of Fourth and Main. I was selling direct mail advertising for a printing company and for nearly a year I was Albert's principal means of support—he did all my layout, sketching and art work. During that time Albert was always scrupulously clean in his appearance, but his clothes had been darned, mended and patched times beyond mention.

One day he came to see me—he was resplendent in brand new clothes and the work of a tonsorial artist was also very apparent. He announced that he would not be able to work for me any longer; that he was going out to Hollywood to get a job with Disney. I asked him how he could be sure of a job and with that calm confidence which you, too, must have known, he assured me that he would be successful. Then I asked him if he had robbed a bank. Albert confessed that each time I had paid him for his work he had been investing in a ticket in the Chinese lottery and that the week before he had "caught" a six spot which had paid off several thousand dollars. That was the last time I saw him.²¹



THE FIRST CONCEPT ARTIST

After this stroke of fortune, Hurter settled down. On June 1, 1931, at almost fifty years of age, he joined the Disney Studio, thanks to Ted Sears. Ted had been hired by Disney just two and a half months earlier, on March 16. Along with Webb Smith he formed the nucleus of what would become Disney's Story Department. On Ted's advice, Albert was recruited as an animator, and he was immediately put to work on the Silly Symphony *The Cat's Out*, in which he animated the cat and the tree trunks, before tackling animation on all of the next eight Silly Symphonies, from *Egyptian Melodies* all the way to *Just Dogs* in the first months of 1932.²²

Disney's story team began focusing on one of the next shorts, *Bugs in Love*, in March or April of 1932. "Walt was the first cartoon producer to appreciate the special talents of the individual artist and allow him to concentrate upon the thing he did best," explained Ted Sears. "Since Albert's outstanding ability lay in humorous exaggeration and the humanizing of inanimate objects,

he was soon released from animating and set to work drawing inspirational sketches. Each time a new subject was planned, Albert was consulted and given free rein to let his imagination wander, creating strange animals, plants, scenery, or costumes that might serve as models for the forthcoming production."²³ Things were becoming extremely interesting for Hurter. The genie was out of the bottle. He started "drawing as he pleased."

"Some subjects appealed to him more than others," recalled Ted Sears; and "consequently these brought forth a greater variety of sketches. Disney had found the ideal outlet for Albert's talents. Frequently, when on a definite assignment, his mind and pencil would wander far afield and the results would be weird and surprising—often furnishing the inspiration for an entirely new subject. His pencil was never idle. Grotesque figures, faces, and inexplicable forms verging on surrealism appeared in the [edges] of nearly every one of his drawings. When the idea for *Three Little Pigs* began to develop, it was Albert who designed the principal characters, their costumes, and their respective homes."²⁴

ABOVE: Character study and storyboard drawing for *The Tortoise and the Hare* (1934).

Another seminal short that benefited from Albert's designs was the Silly Symphony *The Wise Little Hen*, in which Donald Duck made his first appearance in 1934. Animator Bill Cottrell recalled Albert's work on Donald Duck in particular:

We had the duck character because Walt had seen or heard Clarence Nash. So we had the duck, and we knew we were going to use his voice. What he looked like, I had no idea; and Albert Hurter drew the duck, and he put a sailor suit on him. Albert really created the concept. It may have developed and changed as time went by, but Albert put [Donald] in the role of where a duck should be, on the water, a sailor. Those things are so small; but someone thinks of that, and does that, and that becomes important. Without that, I don't know what he would have been.²⁵

Hurter's influence on his fellow Disney artists went beyond the character design or his thousands of inspirational sketches. He also introduced his colleagues to some of the masters, from the early Dutch painters to the German illustrators Hermann Vogel and Heinrich Kley, who fascinated Walt and his team. In the early '30s the Studio even bought four books by Vogel from Hurter.²⁶

Disney artist and caricaturist T. Hee still remembered, years later, how Hurter introduced him to the art of French caricaturist Sem:

[Albert] brought a book to the [Studio] library one day, and when I went into the library to get something, here were four or five of the members of Joe Grant's Story Department and some of the other departments and they were looking at this book of caricatures by Sem. It was a huge book, maybe 24 inches wide by 28 or 29 inches high. I had seen some of these caricatures in magazines that a neighbour had; she was considered kind of sophisticated because she subscribed to *La Vie Parisienne* magazine, a French magazine that had a lot of semi-unclad young ladies in it. But Sem's caricatures were of the people of that day, and I was intrigued by his drawings.



I said, "My goodness, that's that French caricaturist, Sem." He said, "Yes, I picked this up in a second-hand bookstore. I bought it not for me but for someone else." Several of the other boys said, "How much did you pay for it?" He said, "It doesn't make any difference how much I paid for it." "Well, look, I'd like to buy it. Would you take \$25, or \$30?" One fellow said he'd give \$50 for it. He said, "No, that book is for T. Hee. He is the caricaturist." And he gave me the book. I still have it.²⁷

Hurter's assistant Bob Kuwahara.
Courtesy: Michel Kuwahara.

Walt, who did not miss anything that happened in his Studio, knew of Albert's skills as a caricaturist and when, in January 1936, he started toying with the idea of establishing a caricature class led by story artist Joe Grant, he immediately thought of Hurter as one of the potential teachers: "Such men as Campbell Grant, Ward Kimball, Albert Hurter could be a big help to the class to just informally discuss with the others the things they know about caricaturing."²⁸

A BRILLIANT AND LOVABLE MAN

Hurter was a man of surprising habits, as his Barré-Bowers colleagues had realized many years earlier. Things did not change at Disney. According to fellow Disney artist Jack Kinney, his routine was set in stone:

Albert always got to the Studio at 6:30 A.M. to walk around the parking lot adjacent to our apartment houses, smoke his cigar, and read all the papers—until 8 A.M., when, well informed, he was ready to work. Sometimes he was more informed than he realized. Ted Sears often brought him the papers, and Ted was an expert at meticulously doctoring the headlines to make them more sensational than intended. He'd take the most innocuous day and turn it into a disastrous one. Albert never discovered Ted's ploy, but he would always explode at the startling news: "Mein Gott! Would you look vot dat crazy Hitler is doing now!"

Albert was a loner—he never married—and would work no other way. He insisted on living in a hotel at Fourth and Main [a shady neighborhood and the same place where Albert resided while working for Van Nostrand]. There he could observe a great many offbeat characters and things, and his pencil would re-create them in far-out drawings of every kind imaginable.

At noon, Albert would emerge to walk around the Studio, smoke his cigar, and stop to talk on any subject. As he walked, we noticed he had a tendency to limp slightly. One day I asked him about his feet. Did they hurt? Were his shoes too tight?

"Naw," said Albert, "my shoes, that's where I carry my cash. I do not trust some of the neighborhood people around Fourth and Main streets." Well, that was a simple answer from a complicated man.²⁹

Bill Cottrell recalled another of his quirks, which was a great help to him in his work:

Albert was unusually brilliant. He had a marvellous background in art. He [. . .] loved to draw, loved museums and loved all the art work he'd ever seen. The things that he liked, he remembered everything. He was a great man to work with. If you wanted the uniform of a Swiss guard, he could draw it. He would say: "That has six buttons on it; I remember, I saw it in a museum in Zurich." You know, he remembered everything!³⁰

This stunning photographic memory was confirmed by another of Hurter's colleagues at the time, puppeteer Bob Jones:

I was working up some mechanical drawings. [. . .] He looked at me and said, "Hey, that joint . . . I remember that 1913 tractor. It was a U.S. Caterpillar." I looked at him sort of strange. He said, "That joint, the way they had it . . ." and he started . . . He made this very interesting three-dimensional sketch of this joint. He said, "This is what they used." I said, "Albert, [what about] the 1912 tractor?" He said, "I don't know anything about that." I said, "Okay, [what] about the 1914?" And he said, "I don't know anything about that, either." I said, "Okay; how did you know the 1913?" He said, "I read a brochure on it once." Talk about a photographic mind!³¹

FROM CONCEPT ART TO ART DIRECTION

Walt deeply valued Albert's talent; and, when the Studio started work on the first two feature-length pictures, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Pinocchio*, Hurter was instrumental in establishing the European look and feel of both movies. In 1936, director Dave Hand had told a group of layout artists:

Albert [is] to be the supervisor of keying the picture [*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*], the interior of the Dwarfs' house and all exteriors—woods, sunlight, dark moonlight shots—Albert [is] to watch that closely. For that reason mainly it would be necessary for each layout man to work with Albert. [...] Tom [Codrick], who is handling the interior of the Dwarfs' house and Terrell [Stapp] will work together, but pass through Albert so that we have the correct character of the Dwarfs' house—so it is with the exteriors—Mack [Stewart] and Charles [Payzant]. [...] It will be through contact with Albert we will get the character we are after.³²

Background artist Claude Coats recalled, many years later:

Albert Hurter was the one who really started off on *Snow White*, with carving things in there, and the backs of chairs, and little animals. And his drawings were what was incorporated into *Snow White*. During the period before *Pinocchio* he did an awful lot of little jugs that had funny faces on them, and handles and funny feet, and all kinds of ways of humanizing inanimate objects. He did an awful lot of styling on the clocks and the music boxes and all the little things that came in and out. Just the general character of things. Probably the style of the architecture, or the carving on the little stand that Cleo's fish bowl was standing on.³³



Albert Hurter at his desk, working on *Pinocchio*.

Hurter's influence on the look and feel of *Snow White* and *Pinocchio* was absolutely critical. But even at this stage of his Disney career, his main contribution came under the guise of inspirational sketches. He was, more than anything else, that spark that kept others inspired.

"The way Walt used Albert Hurter was to turn him loose on a project, give him his head over a situation or story, and see what he could come up with," explained Dick Huemer. "Albert would sit by himself all day and fill sheet after sheet with drawings, all highly imaginative and often startlingly grotesque."³⁴ Once turned loose, Hurter produced so much, and his artistic range was so broad, that even Walt seemed at times a little overwhelmed. In an early story meeting discussing *Alice in Wonderland* in December 1938, Walt exclaimed about one of the sequences: "This is a marvelous chance for us to use a lot of screwy stuff of Albert's that he does back there that we can't find any place for in any picture because it's too screwy."³⁵

A LAST BOW ON STAGE

By the late '30s, Hurter was involved in every single animated feature that Walt was considering, creating inspirational sketches for *Fantasia*, *The Reluctant Dragon*, and *Dumbo*, as well as for many features that would only be released after World War II, well after he passed away. These included *The Wind in the Willows* (a sequence that was integrated in *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*), *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan*, *Johnny Fedora and Alice Bluebonnet* (a sequence of *Make Mine Music*), *Bongo* (a sequence of *Fun and Fancy Free*) and even *Lady and the Tramp*.

In the latter half of 1940, Albert moved from his quarters in Los Angeles to a stone lodge in the San Fernando Valley on Ventura Boulevard, which he intended to furnish as a combined studio and library, to quietly pursue his hobbies. But his health failed him before these plans were completed.³⁶ In October of that year the fifty-seven-year-old Hurter was rushed to the Hollywood Hospital and was diagnosed as suffering from pulmonary edema, a health issue often caused by congestive heart failure.³⁷ By the end of November, his health seemed to be improving, and he was moved to a convalescent home, the Cedar Lodge Sanitarium.³⁸ Through the whole ordeal, he kept drawing.

On February 19, 1941, Joe Grant wrote to Walt: "Albert is working on the flea circus in *Fido Bones* [a project that was later abandoned]."³⁹ Joe also sent a note of praise to Hurter through Studio nurse Hazel George, who reported: "Last night I took your 'P.S.' to Albert. He blushed with the joy and relief it brought and said, 'Now I can really work. This is what I have been waiting for. I was so afraid I had lost it—so Joe thinks it's all right.'"

He wants me to tell you not to be afraid of overworking him or of putting him under pressure, because he knows now how to conserve and use his ebb and flow of energy. 'I have learned to live with it,' he said, indicating his heart."⁴⁰ The following month, Hurter told Hazel: "You bring the work! I go crazy if I don't work."⁴¹

In May, Disney's accountant at the time, O. B. Johnston, a good friend of Hurter's, informed members of his family (who lived abroad) of the grim prognosis of the doctors:

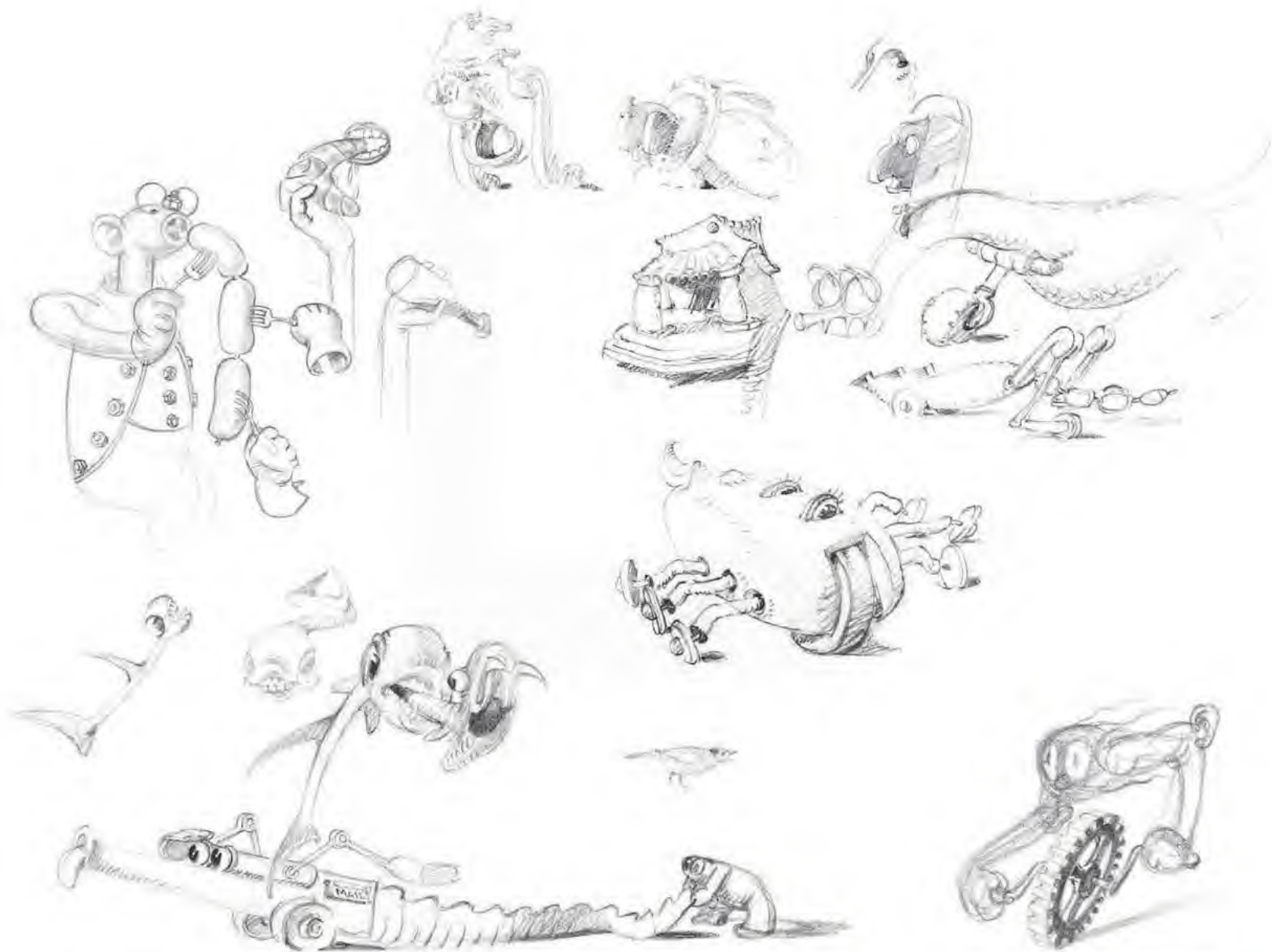
Albert is still in a convalescent home. It is a very lovely place with extensive grounds and beautifully landscaped. He sits out in the open all day long and reads and rests and takes good care of himself. He has twenty-four-hour nursing service at the home. He does not walk around except the short distance from his bed to the bathroom. He is wheeled back and forth in a wheel chair when he goes outside to sit in the grounds. He is doing some drawing for the Studio but we are not encouraging him to overdo this.

As I told you in my original letter his heart is very weak and much enlarged. The smallest effort brings on considerable palpitation and shortness of breath. I know you would want me to tell you exactly how his doctors feel regarding his future. His doctors, after extended observation and study feel that there is not much likelihood that Albert will ever be well enough again to take care of himself. There is a great danger that if he were left alone he might have a serious heart attack and it is therefore important for him to have someone with him all the time. Because of his heart it is not considered likely that he will ever be able to walk around very much, or to engage in any activity that would put a strain on his enervated heart muscle. He has done some very good drawings recently. [. . .]⁴²

Less than a year later, on March 28, 1942, Albert Hurter passed away. Seven years after his death, Simon & Schuster released a collection of his drawings in book form, titled *He Drew as He Pleased*, a volume that, more than half a century later, thanks to its endlessly creative designs, remains a source of inspiration for countless artists in the field of animation and gave me the impetus to write the book you are currently holding—a book that I hope will introduce you to the bizarre, grotesque, and endlessly fascinating world of Albert Hurter.



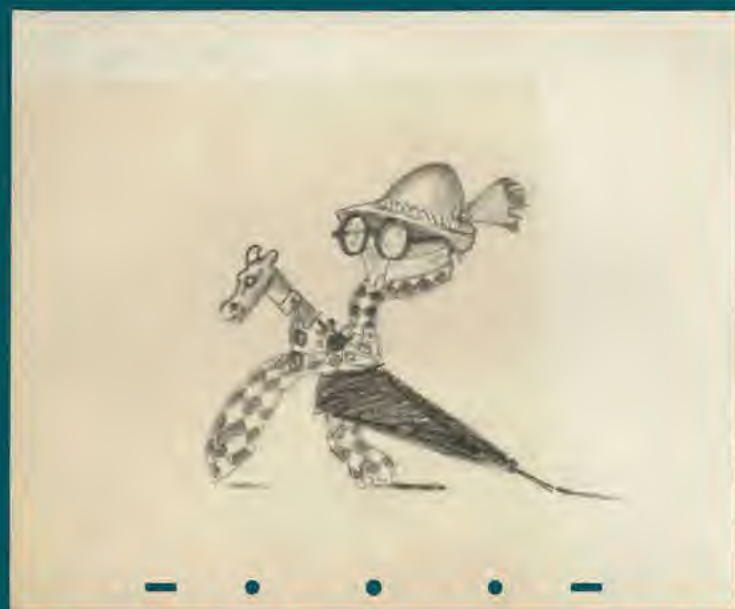
ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Hunter was clearly fascinated by mechanical contraptions, which are featured time and again in his work.





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: The countless doodles, such as these, which often surround Hunter's concept sketches, are as fascinating as the primary drawing and a reflection of his boundless imagination.





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Doodles





Flower studies



ABOVE: Sketches of Mickey's nemesis Pete for *Mickey in Arabia* (1952)



ABOVE LEFT: Gag drawings, possibly created for the shorts *Mickey's Good Deed* (1952) or *Touch-down Mickey* (1952).

ABOVE RIGHT: Gag drawing, possibly created for *Mickey's Good Deed* (1952).





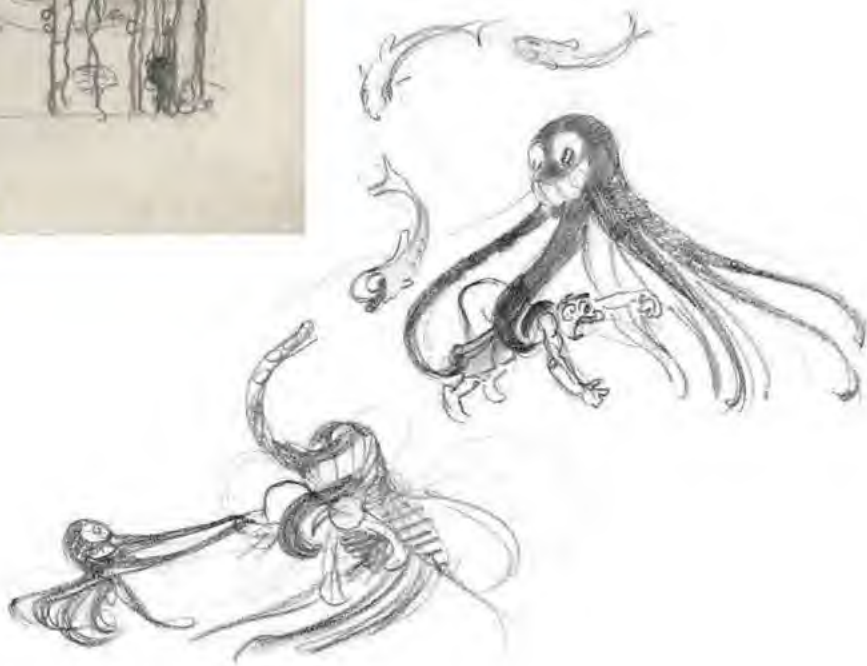
Gag drawings, reminiscent of the short *Trader Mickey* (1932)



Character studies and gag drawings for the short *Babes in the Woods* (1952), and character studies reminiscent of the witch in the same. Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum and the Walt Disney Archives.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Storyboard and gag drawings for the *Silly Symphony* *King Neptune* (1932).





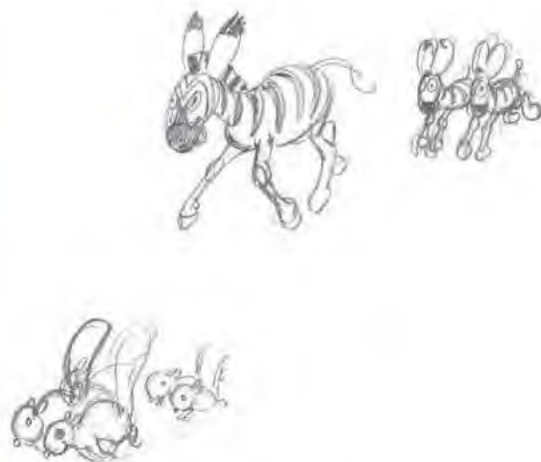


ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Gag drawings for the short *Building a Building* (1932).





BELOW: Gag drawings and character studies for the Silly Symphony *Father Noah's Ark* (1928).





ABOVE AND RIGHT: Gag drawings for the Mickey short *Olden Days* (1935).



ABOVE AND LEFT: Character studies for *The Pied Piper* (1933).



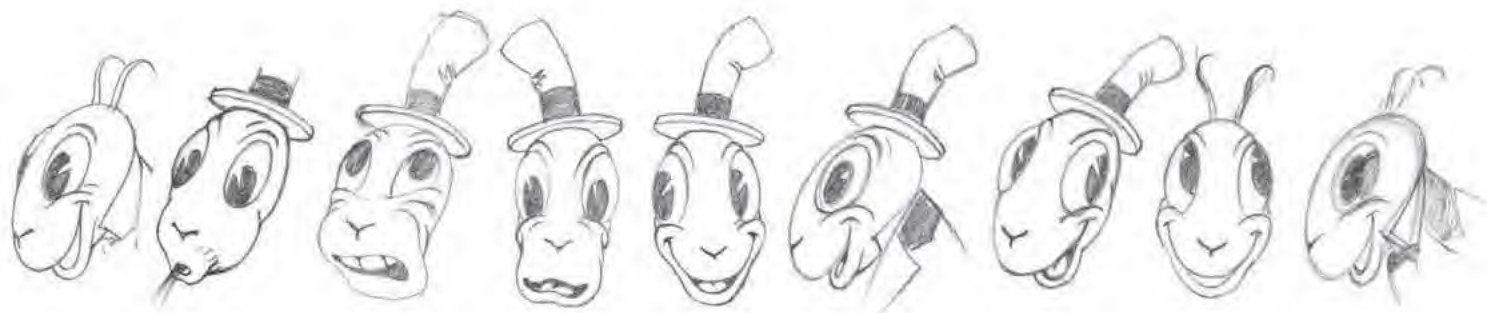
ABOVE AND RIGHT: Character studies for the
Silly Symphony *The China Shop* (1933).



ABOVE: Gag drawing and character studies for the
Silly Symphony *The Night Before Christmas* (1933).



Character studies for the Silly Symphony
The Flying Mouse (1934).



COAT OF ARMS



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character studies for the
Silly Symphony *The Grasshopper and the Ants* (1934)





Character studies for the Silly Symphony, *The Wise Little Hen* (1934)





Gag drawings and character studies for the Silly Symphony *Peculiar Penguins* (1934).



ABOVE: Character studies possibly created for *The Hot Chocolate Soldiers* (1954) or *The Cookie Carnival* (1955).





ABOVE: Character and background studies created for *The Hot Chocolate Soldiers* (1954) or *The Cookie Carnival* (1955).



Character and background studies for the Silly Symphony *Who Killed Cock Robin?* (1934).



ABOVE: Character studies for the Silly Symphony
Three Blind Mice (1936)



ABOVE: Insect studies, probably created for the
Silly Symphony *Woodland Cafe* (1937)



Character studies for the abandoned project
Reynard the Fox (c. 1937)

BELOW: Character studies for the Huntsman in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).



LEFT: The Queen's raven from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.



ABOVE: Character studies of vultures, possibly for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.



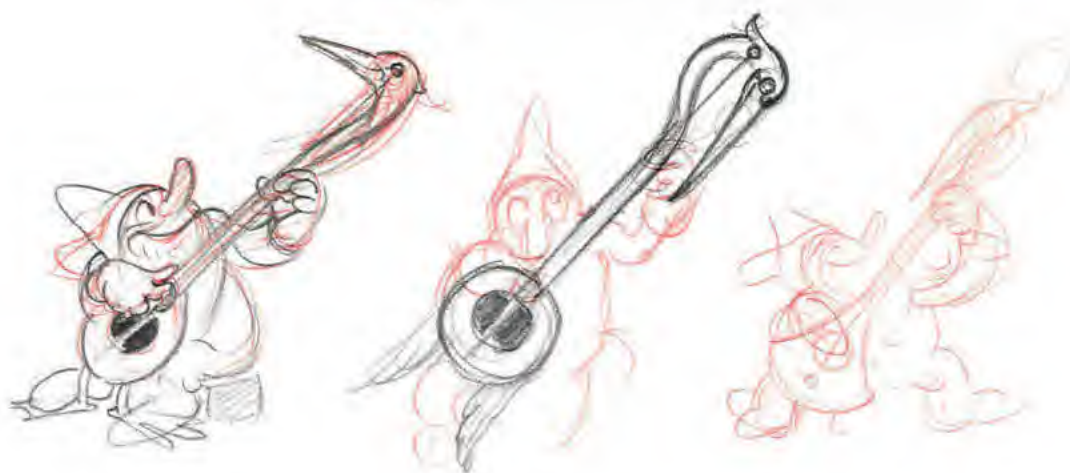
HAPPY

Happy, when there is nothing else to do - scratches.



GRUMPY

Grumpy, when irritated, waves his cane about and thumps it on ground - often it lands on his own foot - thereby driving his original peeve from his mind - he then turns his anger on himself.



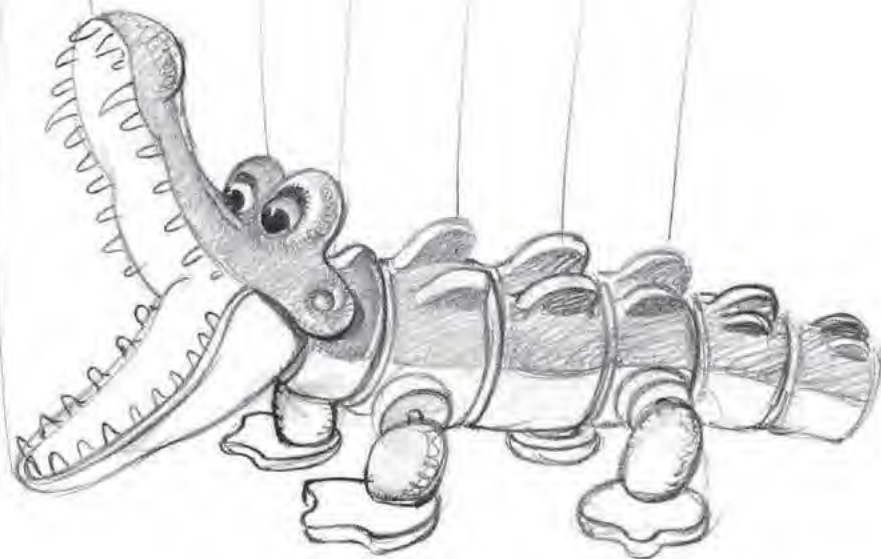
ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Early concepts for the dwarfs in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.



ABOVE: Early character study of Doc created for a sequence in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* that was later abandoned.



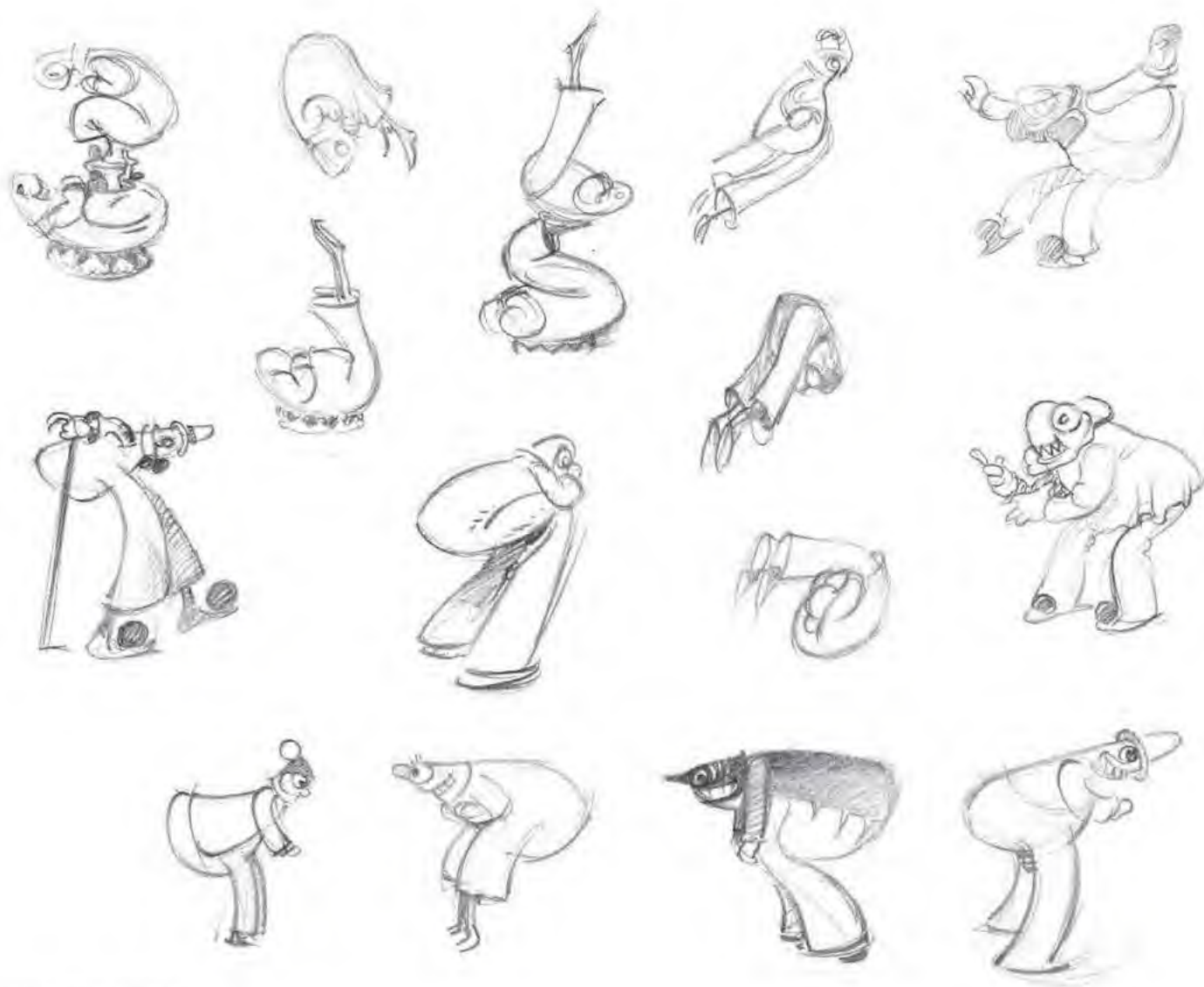
ABOVE LEFT: Study for one of the clocks from Geppetto's workshop in *Pinochio* (1940)



ABOVE RIGHT: Marionette study, possibly created for the Stromboli sequence in *Pinochio*.



Various sketches created for Pinocchio (1940)



Early character studies for a still very insect-like
Jinny Cricket.

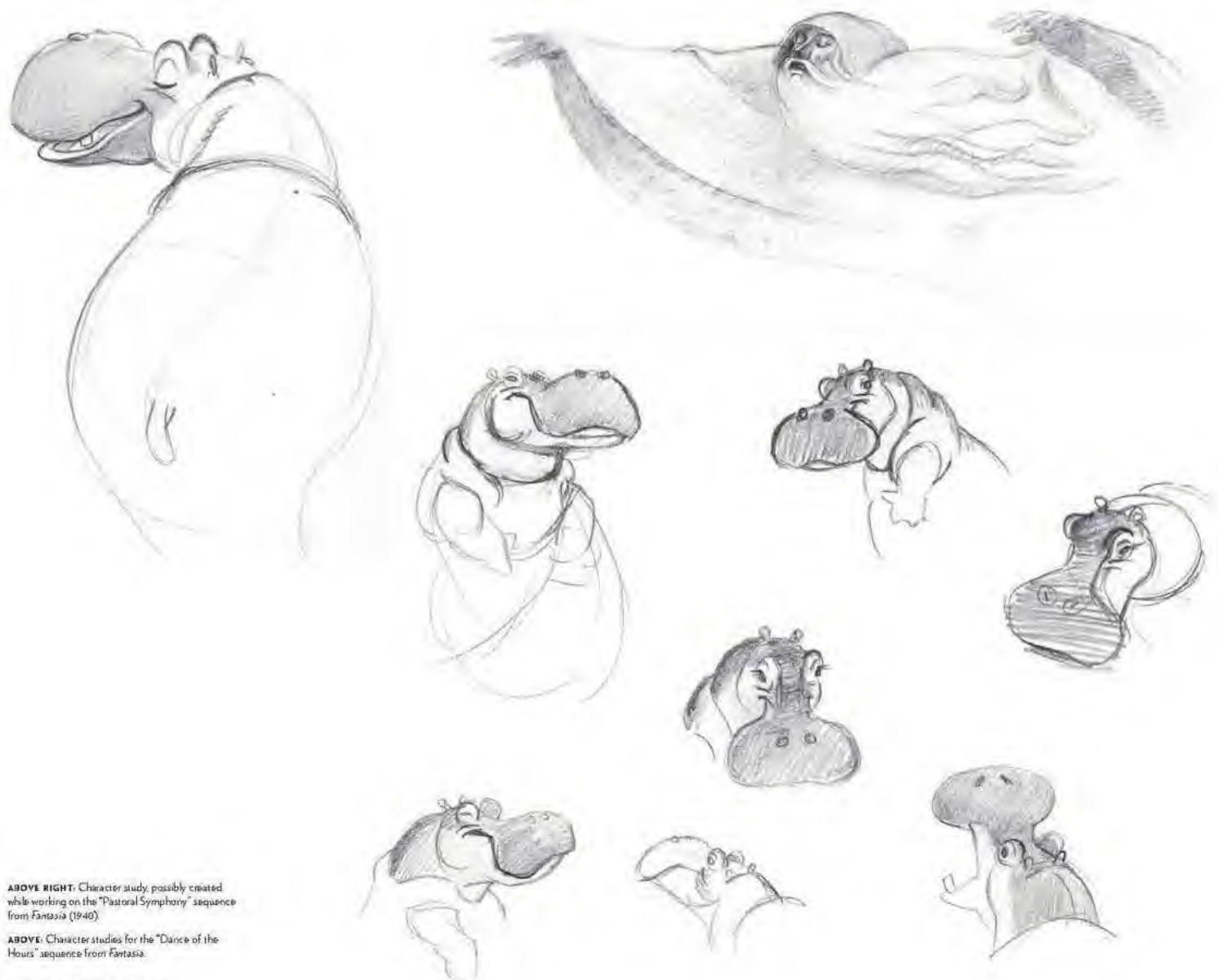


Later character studies of Jimmy Cricket.
The character as we know him is taking shape.





Abstract studies created for a special surrealist short "planned to kid surrealism" (c. 1940).

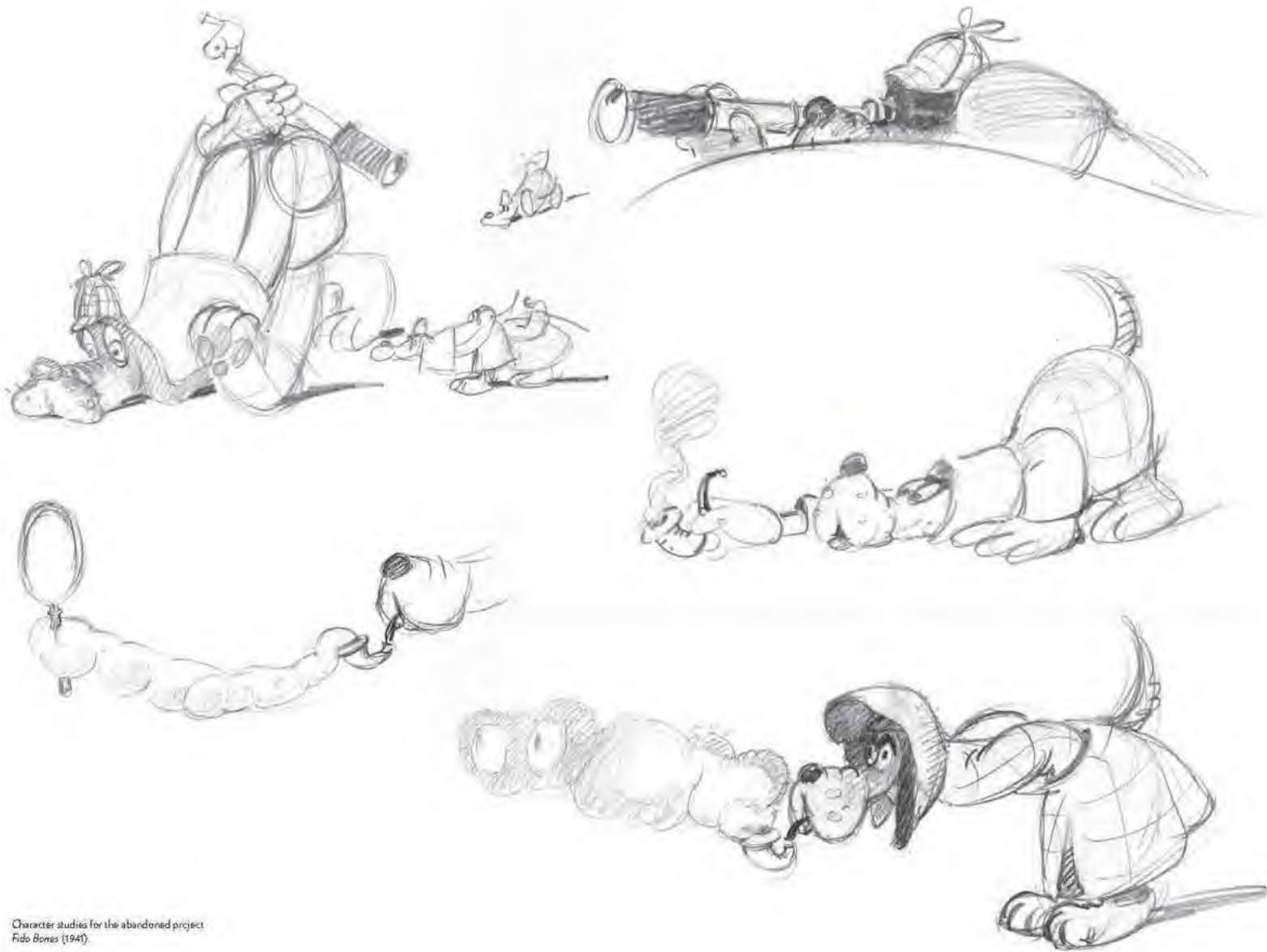


ABOVE RIGHT: Character study, possibly created while working on the "Pastoral Symphony" sequence from *Fantasia* (1940).

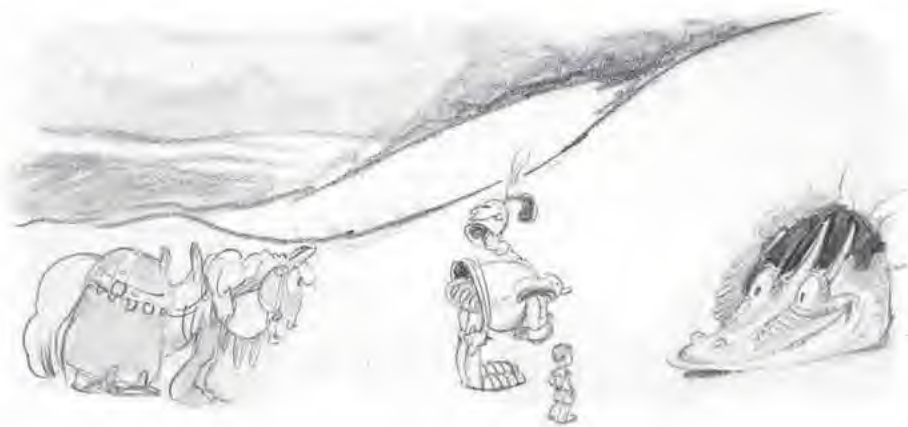
ABOVE: Character studies for the "Dance of the Hours" sequence from *Fantasia*.



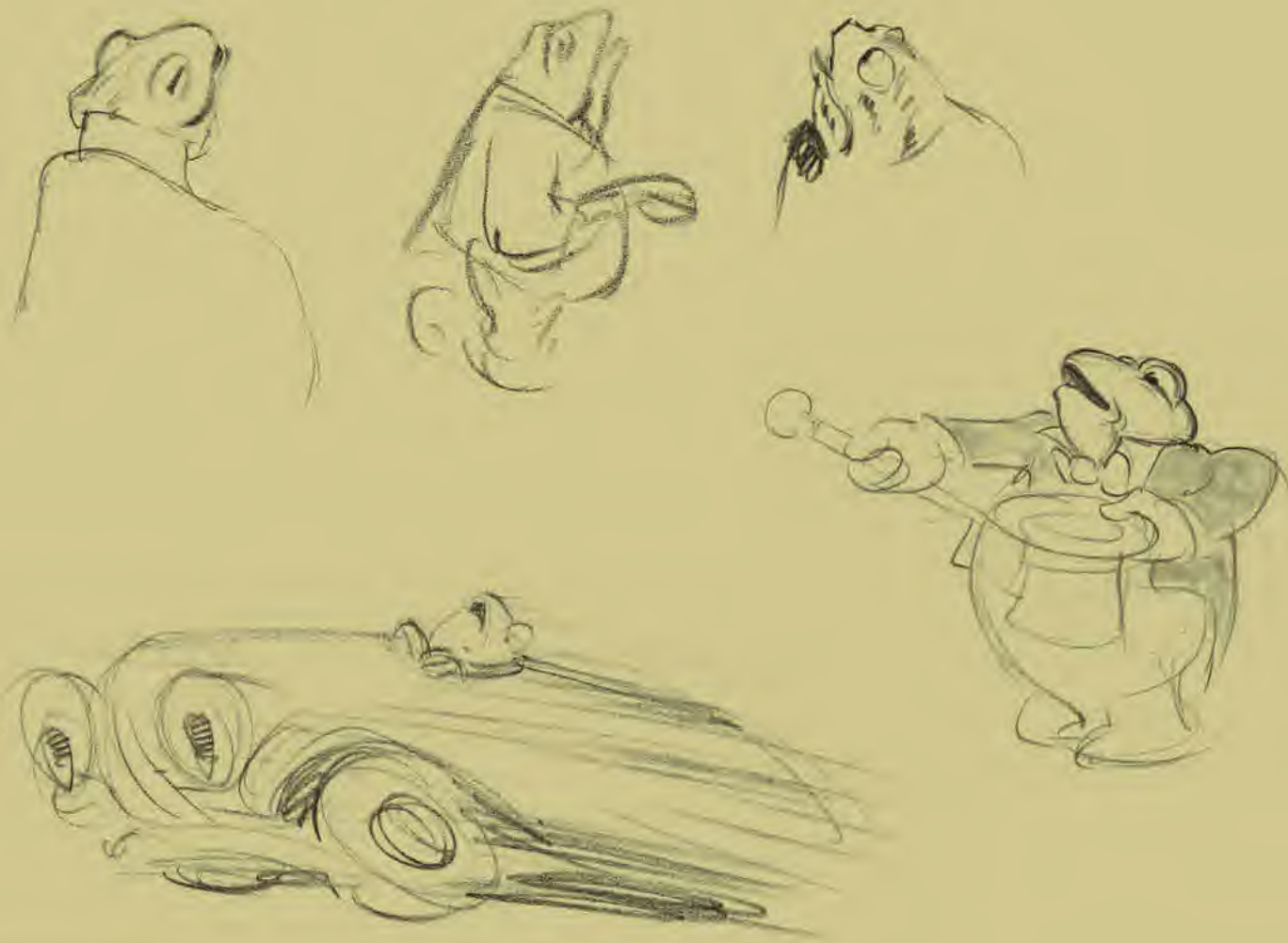
Character studies for the abandoned short
Hootsie the Owl (1940).



Character studies for the abandoned project
Fido Bones (1941).



The Reluctant Dragon (1941)



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character studies for *Wind in the Willows*, eventually released as part of *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949).

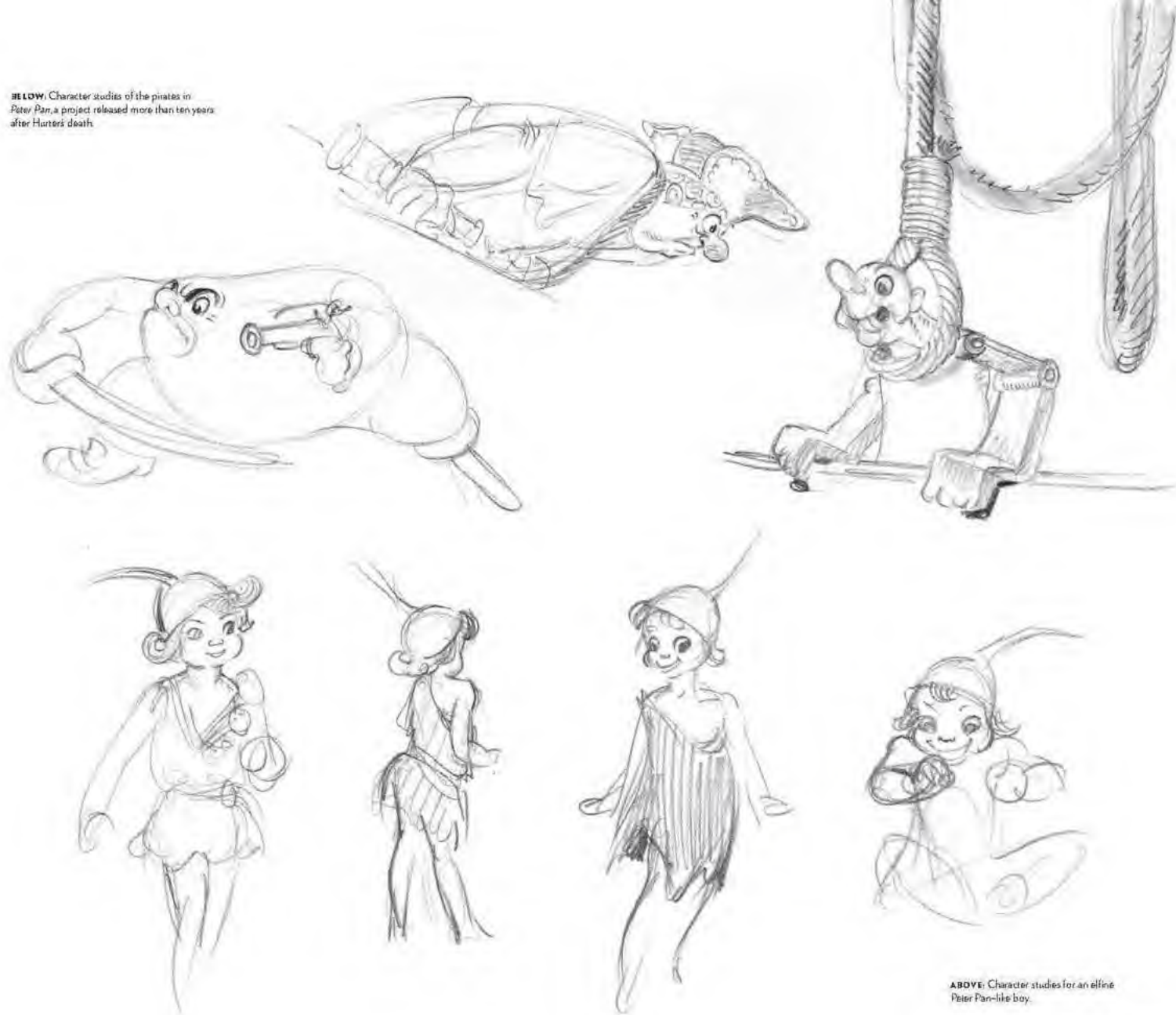




ABOVE: Sketch for *Cinderella* (1950), a movie which was released almost a decade after Hunter passed away.

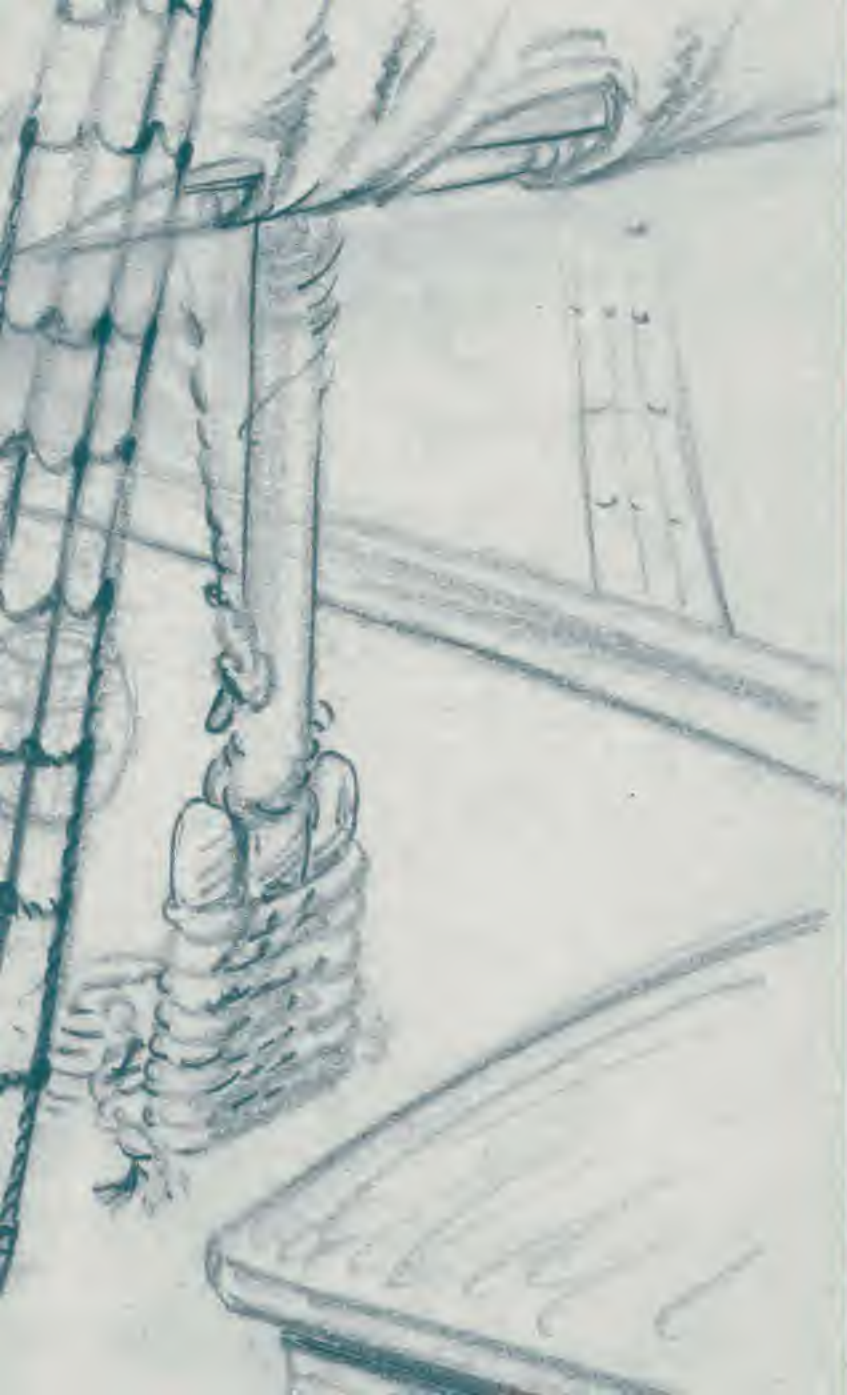
ABOVE: Early character studies for *Dumbo*.

BELOW: Character studies of the pirates in *Peter Pan*, a project released more than ten years after Hunter's death.



ABOVE: Character studies for an elflike Peter Pan-like boy.





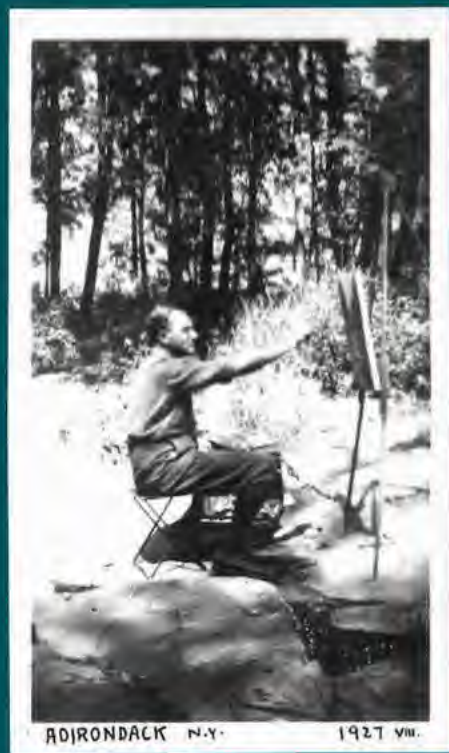
2

FERDINAND HORVATH

"You wouldn't expect a person who is able to capture the flight of thought and to project seeming absurdities in a bafflingly practical form on paper to be a well-balanced, even-tempered, cool-headed type."

—FERDINAND HORVATH TO WALT DISNEY





FERDINAND HUSZTI HORVATH and Albert Hurter had little in common. Though they both came from the Old World and drew dozens of inspirational sketches a day while at Disney, the similarities stopped there. Horvath was an extrovert who had lunch with a different colleague every day, a fan of movies who spent almost every night at the cinema, and a passionate and impulsive artist who made decisions he often regretted. Horvath's drawings, while immensely creative, were also strictly linked to the projects that Walt was tackling at precise points in time. Though they were less fanciful than Hurter's, on the Silly Symphonies they had a more direct impact on character and environment design.

The second of Disney's concept artists was himself a character with a dramatic story.

FROM PRISONER OF WAR TO ANIMATION PIONEER

"I was born [on August 28,] 1891, in Budapest, Hungary, and my father wanted to make a merchant out of me," explained Horvath in 1930 in a short autobiography he wrote for the book *Contemporary Illustrators of Children's Books*:

His plans foundered on my objections, for I wanted to become an engineer and so I registered at an engineer's preparatory school. Free-hand drawing at school had no attraction for me—I turned out such poor work that I nearly failed at each graduation.

Very soon after I left school the war broke out and I joined as a reserve officer of the Austro-Hungarian army with a Kai-

serjaeger Regiment. Right after the outbreak I fought the Russians, was wounded and finally captured. I spent two and a half years as a prisoner of war in various Russian prison camps. Then I escaped and luckily got through.

I wrote my adventures in a novel, *Captured*. While being a prisoner of war I took up drawing to kill time...

I came to New York on Armistice Day in the year 1921 and landed from the steerage with forty-five dollars. I brought with me a collection of ivory miniatures (also my own work) which I hoped to sell. This remaining a mere hope and the forty-five dollars spent, I went to paint window frames on Avenue C, then graduated to paint a coal barge on the river Hudson and after that took all the odd jobs that go with the education of a greenhorn. Finally I landed a job with some stage-lighting people, where I painted fat little cupids for revolving mica-discs. From the cupid-manufacturers I was fired after two months and for several months thereafter I painted doll heads. With envy I must think what a fine, slim waistline I had at that time.

Followed six years permanency with a movie concern [Paul Terry's Fables Studio in New York], making animated cartoons, averaging one hundred and fifty to two hundred [drawings] a day—fortunately the talkies put me on the street once more. That was two years ago and I decided to become a regular free-lance artist. After two weeks of strenuous walking I sold some jazzed-up foxhunting pictures to *Harper's Bazaar* and contributed since many others.⁴³

OPPOSITE LEFT: Ferdinand Horvath on the roof of a building in New York, Autumn 1925. Courtesy: Martin Collins.

OPPOSITE RIGHT: Ferdinand Horvath painting in the Adirondacks in August 1927. Courtesy: Martin Collins.

While working at Fables, Paul Terry's animation studio, Ferdinand met animator Norman Ferguson (known as "Fergie"), who joined Disney in 1929 and became one of Walt's top animators and the great specialist of Pluto. In 1932, Ferdinand decided to reconnect with his former colleague, who mentioned that Disney was looking for talented artists. Horvath took the hint and on September 15, 1932, he wrote a passionate letter to Walt, the first of many. It's a long letter—three pages—I've excerpted key sections below:

Dear Mr. Disney,

I am writing to you these lines presuming that Ferguson was kind enough to have mentioned my name to you before. . . .

After holding several jobs, most of which had to do with painting or drawing, I drifted into "Fables," where starting as a tracer I worked myself up to an animator, holding my job for six years.

With the big events of 1928, through the uncertainty caused by the advent of the talking pictures, "Fables" retrenched considerably. For the next four years I went into magazine and mainly into book illustrating. Merely as a matter of record, may I be permitted to state here that within this time I established myself in the foremost ranks of American book illustrators. . . .

But even during these years of freelance work I kept closely in touch with animated cartoons, this time with sound pictures. Strangely the fascination of dynamic action has lured me back again to this most unique mode of expression of life and motion, offering to an artist almost limitless possibilities for expressing himself.

With such ideals, following an invitation from "Terrytoons" I joined their staff. Unfortunately, I was soon to be disappointed, as for none of my talents was there an outlet. One could not change or improve on threadbare and overworked stories, being Paul Terry's principle not to accept ideas from his own staff.

It was the same situation with gags that were suggested. Owing to the technical rigidity and inflexibility of story and synchronization, no gags or changes could be inserted after the "beater" was run, this being the first occasion the animators had to hear the sound and to learn the character of the story. Besides, I could not and cannot agree with the extremely mechanical aspect so characteristic of their animation. For such and other reasons we parted.

I hope you will forgive me if I say that at this point your "Mickey Mouse" just rushed upon me. Not for the first time in my life, of course, but now in a businesslike fashion. . . .

I would like to ask you, Mr. Disney, whether you would have use for me? . . .

The work I am submitting will give you only a part of my range. I also do pen and ink work, straight caricatures, and wash drawings, not to mention ivory miniatures, crayon, pastel, and other media not used in cartooning.

For a time I have specialized in backgrounds. I wish I could show you some samples of this kind of work, however I have no access to the backgrounds I made. I would like to suggest that you see the "Terrytoon" called *Irish Stew* for which I made a very effective, softly toned set of backgrounds, giving depth and a rich quality to the picture. . .

I hope I did not go too lengthy into matters, and I do hope you will understand why I did not want to address you in a strictly businesslike manner. "Mickey Mouse" might be a business venture—it most probably is—yet to me it will always be a merry gloom chaser, a lighthearted work of artistic creation the originator of which I want to regard as an artist to whom I can put up the matter squarely, confidently, in the true esprit de corps.

May I ask you to look over the material at your convenience and then inform me of your decision? ⁴⁴



THE JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES

Walt liked what he saw. On November 28, Ferdinand learned that he would be hired on a six-month trial basis. Things were so uncertain financially during the Great Depression that the Horvaths decided that Ferdinand would travel alone to Los Angeles. His wife, Elly, would stay in New York and join him only when things had stabilized professionally on his end. He boarded a train on December 31, got a chance to visit briefly both Chicago and

Bright Angel (at the Grand Canyon) along the way and reached the Santa Fe station in Los Angeles at 11:30 a.m. on January 5, 1933, the day he was to start work. After having settled in the Christie Hotel he went straight to the Disney Studio on Hyperion Avenue, where he arrived at three o'clock in the afternoon. At the Studio he met his friend Norman Ferguson, Roy Disney, and a few of his new colleagues: Art Babbitt, Burt Gillett, and Eddie Donnelly. An hour later he spent some time with Walt. Since he did not yet know how to drive and did not own a car, Fergie drove him home.⁴⁵

In his first few months at Disney, Ferdinand quickly became a jack-of-all-trades, tackling layouts, animation, gag drawings, book illustrations, etc. And since he wanted to impress Walt, he also started to work on a script for a Silly Symphony idea called *Clown of the Clouds*. The story, which featured a little watchman in the sky, the sun, and some whimsy dwarfs, was weak and was probably not very well received. This did not discourage Horvath, who was trying to move to the Story Department, the creative heart of the Disney Studio.

Horvath seemed to enjoy himself very much during those first few weeks in Los Angeles. Things were definitely going well. On the weekend of January 14, he joined an outing of Disney personnel to Lake Arrowhead, along with Walt Disney, his assistant, Carolyn Shafer, composer Frank Churchill, story man Ted Sears, and sixteen other colleagues. They were helping Walt with a major Studio promotional event, the Mid-Winter Snow Carnival, dedicated to Mickey Mouse, under the auspices of the Mickey Mouse clubs. Many children attended; and, while the artists were probably expected to work, they also enjoyed some fun activities, such as ice hockey, evening dances, and ski jumping.⁴⁶

The starstruck Horvath was also able to meet some key Hollywood players. On January 21 he wrote to his wife: "I visited [friend and fellow Hungarian illustrator] Willy Pogany last night. [...] It's in my best interest to have a good relationship with him because he knows everyone who is someone in the movie indus-

ABOVE: Ferdinand Horvath at the easel, circa 1930. Courtesy: John Canemaker.

try. There was a chief cameraman at his place last night who gets paid \$1000 weekly [Academy Award-winning cinematographer Charles Rosher]. When he found out I work for Disney, he could not stop praising our movies, mentioning how wonderful they are. And he would know."⁴⁷

It wasn't all fun and parties, though. In a letter a few weeks later he described how his work was progressing at the Studio:

The first few days I was not in synch with things: taking an eight-month break from the drawing board is noticeable, especially considering that I was lifting heavy boxes and was nailing a lot: the type of work that is not good for an artist's hand. I can now say that I'm back to my old self and routine. They are good here. They don't pressure you. My luck: I got another mob scene, where I have to design and animate about seventy animals in running position in twenty drawings [for the Silly Symphony *Father Noah's Ark*].⁴⁸ Today was my eighth day on this scene and it will take another four days for sure before I'm done. It will be an expensive scene. Only Disney can afford this. Cost is not an issue. The mob scene is quite boring to draw.⁴⁹

Two weeks later, by February 24, Ferdinand had moved from the Animation Department to the Publicity Department headed by Tom Wood. This department was responsible for creating the posters and other advertising art as well as illustrations for books and magazines. In a letter to Elly, dated March 2, 1933, he wrote: "I've finished the illustrations (the ones I mentioned I'm doing for Disney) today and now I will most likely be working on 'pop-up' books for Blue Ribbon. You know: those books that you open and the figures stand up. So every week I have to do something I've never done before. All these illustrations have to be done differently than I would've liked, so if I stay with Disney for too long they will ruin my style."⁵⁰ Horvath did end up working on at least one Blue Ribbon pop-up book: the adaption of the Mickey short *Ye Olden Days*.



Character studies, possibly created for the short *Father Noah's Ark* (1933). Courtesy: Dennis Books.

RIDING OUT THE STORM

Work may have been slightly frustrating, but what was much worse for Horvath is that uncertainty seemed to be everywhere, which meant that he could not yet send for Elly. On March 4, the new president, Franklin Roosevelt, had been inaugurated. The Great Depression was at its height, and panic was looming. On March 6, the president declared the mandatory closing of the banks, which managed to stabilize the situation. But businessmen knew that the economy was far from recovered and that they would have to take some drastic measures if they wanted to survive. On Thursday, March 16, Walt and Roy Disney convened a meeting on the Studio soundstage. As Horvath detailed in a letter to Elly a few days later:

There was a huge meeting on Thursday night from five to seven. There were Walt, Roy and their lawyer [Gunter Lessing]. Walt was sitting in the corner of the room all quiet, with concern wrinkling his face. Roy was speaking as the business manager.

As we know, other studios have either shut their doors or drastically reduced their staff's salary by fifty per cent for eight weeks. [. . .] Roy and the lawyer shared their plan of reducing everyone's salary by twenty-five per cent, but not for eight weeks, for a whole year. The twenty-five per cent will remain with the company, like a loan from the employees. The employees will have the right to get stock for up to the twenty-five per cent, or, if things start to look brighter in a year, the company will be willing to pay this back in weekly installments. What the other studios have done is a lot crazier, and compared to their heartless cuts this offer is a rather fair plan favored by everyone. Originally they wanted people to vote on whether they would take the stock option or the repayment plan, but then it was decided to give us a day to think about it before a new meeting on Friday.

Friday night we did have our second meeting. At that time Walt spoke. He told all of us that he personally doesn't favor one option over the other. He ended up telling us that he was only going to cut our pay by ten per cent, and if the Studio produces better and more effectively they will pay the ten per cent back. This plan was even fairer than the other one. Then came the hiccup . . . and that's me. He can only offer this ten per cent reduction by letting go all of the new employees, so the others can benefit from our loss.

Last week they already let a lot of people go. [. . .] Yesterday, Saturday, I was called into his office and he told me that he was sorry, but that he had to let me go. He wanted to give me two weeks' pay or offered to pay my way back to New York. At that point I told him I was sorry too, but we had a six-month contract and he had to respect that. Harsh words followed. We discussed everything for about an hour. I found out that the Animation Department manager, Ben Sharpsteen, made me look bad in Disney's eyes. He told him that I work slowly (it's those insane mob scenes which drive you crazy) and that I am too independent. You can imagine the murderous mood Disney is in lately mixed with my not exactly quiet mood due to the possible bankruptcy, the [recent] earthquake, and being picked on, bullied, etc. We ended up talking it through. Disney said: "No hard feelings?" I said: "Of course not."

To make a long story short, starting tomorrow I will be working in the Story Department. The Story Department manager is Bill Cottrell, one of Disney's old friends with whom I got along great so far. I haven't worked with him yet, so I will find out how things will be. That's that. This is my last chance. I will know more in a few days. [. . .]

One more thing: yesterday when I was leaving the Studio I bumped into Disney, two hours after our big argument. . . . [He was] all smiles and extremely friendly, as if nothing had happened!⁵¹

THE FIRST PARTING OF WAYS

Four days later Ferdinand had joined the Story Department. "We get rough story sketches and we have to create the gags," he detailed in another letter to Elly. "We design the characters, then we are assigned to a director, who then uses his own layout to modify it and give it the shape it will have in the final version. The past three days I have worked on seventeen gags, but I don't know if Disney will like them or not since he will not see them until the end of the week. The atmosphere at the Studio is quite disturbing. The boys are angry since there were more cuts, and they are being asked to work overtime for no extra pay. You know me, I don't get involved . . . I see everything, I hear everything, but as usual I don't talk about any of it, and that's how I cope with it."⁵²

Despite the uncertainty that surrounded him, things were clearly improving, workwise—he was now almost totally focused on his story assignments. And there was even better news: "It is a good sign that the first feature-length production, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, is definitely planned," he wrote to Elly. "So it's not likely that Disney will cut the staff, and my impression is that since he saw my work personally and does not listen to other people's reports his attitude towards me seems to have changed. At least he's friendlier than before. [. . .] I have a feeling that even if it's going to be a tough few months it's worth sticking with Disney because if Disney continues with what he started he will make all other cartoons impossible and he will call all the shots in this business because there're no other cartoons like ours."⁵³

By the end of March, Horvath had started working with director Wilfred Jackson on layouts for *Lullaby Land*, followed a few weeks later by *The Pied Piper*. And, by June, he was working

on character designs for the *Hot Chocolate Soldier* short along with Albert Hurter. But since he knew his contract with the Studio would end exactly a month later, always worried about the uncertain future, he started sending out feelers to other studios, especially the new animation studio established by Leon Schlesinger on the Warner Bros. lot, through his former colleagues Tom Palmer and Jack King. His efforts in that direction were half-hearted. On June 15, he wrote to Elly: "In secret I am hoping that Warner does not want to pay me \$125. Then I wouldn't have to go and work there, because Warner would be a very lousy place after Disney. [. . .]"⁵⁴ On June 29, however, Schlesinger's brother-in-law, Ray Katz, made Ferdinand a formal offer: \$100 a week during the first year, \$125 during the second and \$150 during the third. Horvath knew that this was an excellent proposal, since even his Disney colleague Albert Hurter was only making \$85 a week at the time.⁵⁵

Still, Ferdinand wanted to give Walt a chance to keep him. On July 12, he wrote to Elly:

In the meantime Walt called me into his office yesterday afternoon. I thought he would finally make a move at the twelfth hour. He closed the door and asked me to sit down. I saw that he wanted to say something. He was hesitating. I thought to myself I'd rather bite my tongue off than to be the one mentioning anything. He said nothing. He pulled out a scene that I did a few days ago and he wanted a few changes. Maybe he had it with him just in case.

I was thinking about this all evening and decided that "damn you (I mean Disney) I know you're in a difficult position with me since the March clash and I'm gonna swallow my pride just once more and extend a friendly hand." So at

eight this morning I asked Miss. [Carolyn] Shafer to give me an appointment with Walt. At ten Walt came down to the bungalow to see Albert and me, strictly on business. Before he left he asked me in front of Albert, "Did you want to see me?" "Yes," I said, "but in your private office." "What for?" he asked slyly. "Well," I said, "our agreement is up." "Is it?" he asked. "It is," I said. "Well," he asked, "what do you say?" I said, "I have nothing to say, it's your move." He laughed at that. He knew I was right. "All right," he said, "I'll give you a buzz as soon as I find time."

And that's that. My Disney journey comes to an end, because he of course didn't have any time today and Thursday is his busiest day because of the sweatbox tests, and on Friday he's off to Chicago for ten days where United Artists has a convention. And it would be foolish of me to possibly pass a positive offer based on an uncertain promise when I know that Disney will offer at least 25–30 dollars less.⁵⁶

Ferdinand left Disney on Saturday, July 29. The parting was a friendly one, and on August 5, 1933, Walt wrote Horvath:

Dear Friend Horvath,

I am sorry I did not get to say good-bye to you before you left, but after returning from my trip east, I was very tired and in need of rest. I was unable to get back to work until Monday.

I am sorry that you felt it necessary to give up all that you have been building with us for the last six months, but I hope you will find a place somewhere else that will prove a medium through which you can express yourself more fully.

I sincerely wish you a great deal of success and good luck.⁵⁷

THE WARNER DAYS

Things at Warner went very smoothly at first. Ferdinand joined on July 31 and worked mostly on layout and backgrounds, tackling several of the shorts produced by the studio at the time, like *Those Were Beautiful Days* and *Buddy the Woodsman*. On August 23, he wrote Elly: "Everything's okay at the studio. Schlesinger is paying the money on time. He doesn't mess around."

Things were going so well, in fact, that it was finally time for Elly to come join him in California. She arrived around September 1.⁵⁸

While at Warner, Ferdinand still went to see a picture almost every night. On September 5, 1933, he and Elly decided to watch a Warner movie with Leslie Howard playing a German prisoner of war. The movie's name: *Captured!*, the exact same name as the novel Horvath had released in 1930. To add insult to injury, the film, like the book, dealt with a World War I prisoner of war who managed to escape. Ferdinand was incensed and, letting his emotions lead him once again, he decided . . . to sue Warner Bros.! Needless to say, his boss, Leon Schlesinger, did not look at this with a kind eye, and Horvath soon found himself in an untenable position.⁵⁹

By February 20, 1934, things were going so badly at Warner that he decided to write a letter to Disney:

Dear Walt,

Here I am writing to you again, for your kind lines of last August give me confidence to trust you as a friend.

To come right to the point, I want to say that after working on your "Symphonies," and quite especially after having

worked with you on the *Chocolate Soldier*, I find it difficult to descend to the level of the Warner cartoons.

I am very dissatisfied with the conditions at the Warner studio, where quality means so little, and it is not my intention to get mired in their cheap commercialism.

Since it has been published in the film-trade papers, and also in the newspapers, it might be no news to you that I started legal action against First National Pictures [part of Warner Bros.] for maliciously and willfully appropriating the title of my war book, *Captured!*, which Warner Brothers used for Sir Philipp Gibbs' story. This—as I anticipated—brought things to a rather disagreeable stage. I am writing you all this to give you a truthful picture of how things are.

You will understand that for all the above-mentioned reasons I find it very depressing to work any longer for Warner Brothers. True, we have a contract, but under the circumstances I will ask them for a release, which in turn will release them from all their obligations.

Please, let's talk over things some evening at your convenience. I am all for animation now, and I have samples to show you, which I believe are up to *your* standards. But outside of animation, you know my versatility, and should you need me at any time on some special planning that requires imagination and fantasy, I shall be always at your disposal.⁶⁰

Walt wanted Horvath back and offered him a job in the Story Department at a salary of \$75 a week. Not enough.

On August 7, Ferdinand made another attempt and went to the Disney Studio to show Walt some animation tests that he had put together. Walt loved what he saw that day and asked Horvath to come back to the Studio on September 17 as part of the Story Department with a \$100 a week salary. Deal!⁶¹

AN IDEA A MINUTE . . . FOR FOUR YEARS

During his second stay at Disney, Ferdinand animated on a few shorts, such as *Mickey's Man Friday*, *The Band Concert*, *Mickey's Service Station*, and *Mickey's Garden*, and handled layout on a few others, but this was the exception. He had now firmly become a story man, character designer, and concept artist. He was Disney's second concept artist, but his art and his role differed in significant ways from that of his colleague Albert Hurter. While Hurter's drawings are very sketchy and are meant to be a pure source of inspiration for the other artists, Horvath's drawings tend to be much more detailed and to make a deliberate effort to suggest precise story ideas or the final look of characters. While Hurter "drew as he pleased," Horvath's art gives the clear impression that his chief objective was to please Walt and to ensure that his ideas made it to the screen. The detailed and self-contained approach of Horvath's drawings is also characteristic of his training as a book illustrator. Hurter and Horvath had one element in common, though: the sheer number and scope of ideas they explored. As with Hurter, there seemed to be no end to Horvath's creativity. For the abandoned Mickey short *Mickey's Sea Serpent* he created hundreds of versions of the sea monster, each more fanciful than the preceding one, while on the short *Ballet des Fleurs*, the situations and characters he designed could have filled a full-length feature.

Ferdinand did not stop drawing for a minute. He worked on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and on many of the best Disney shorts of the era, including *The Robber Kitten* (the first project he was involved in after his return), *Elmer Elephant*, *Alpine Climbers*, *Mickey's Circus*, *Mickey's Rival*, *Three Blind Mouseketeers*, *The Country Cousin*, *Moose Hunters*, *Woodland Café* (with Bianca Majolie), *The Worm Turns*, *The Old Mill* (for which he built an impressive 3D model), *Clock Cleaners*, *Little Hiawatha*, *Moth and*

Introducing Dopey:

The seven dwarfs on their way home.

Dopey takes extra long steps and in consequence always steps on rear end of slippers of the dwarfs in front of him - causing dwarf to loose slippers.



Early concept drawing of Dopey by Horvath for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

the Flame, The Fox Hunt, Polar Trappers, The Practical Pig, Brave Little Tailor, Mickey's Trailer, Lonesome Ghosts, Farmyard Symphony, Merbabies, Mother Goose Goes Hollywood, The Ugly Duckling, and Nifty Nineties.

Like all the other story artists at the Studio, Horvath also tackled a large number of exciting projects that were eventually shelved by Walt. The list, once again, is a long one and includes: *Mickey's Toothache, Mickey's Sea Serpent, Streubel Peter, Reynard the Fox, Mickey's Barber Shop, The Eskimo Kid, Stone Age Mickey, Ballet des Fleurs, The Wise Little Owl, Mickey in the Navy, Timid Elmer, Easter Bunnies, Mickey's Follies, The Legionnaires, Santa Claus Symphony, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Mickey in Pigmy Land, and The Outboard Motor Race.*⁶²

But work, once again, did involve some fun: like a night out at the Philharmonic on February 1, 1936, to attend a performance of the Ballet Russe as Walt's guest, along with his colleagues Bianca Majolie, Walt Pfeiffer, Joe Grant, Larry Morey, Dave Hand, Dick Huemer, and Ken Anderson, in order to gather ideas for a Radio City Silly Symphony Ballet project on which Bianca and he were working and which was later abandoned.⁶³

THE SECOND PARTING OF WAYS

By June 1937, at the height of production on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the work pace at the Studio grew even more frantic, and spirits were volatile. Horvath was asked to move to the Publicity Department. Walt wanted him to handle some of the illustrations for the deluxe *Snow White* book that would be released by Harper and Brothers. From mid-June to the end of September, Horvath tackled the task with gusto, in addition to his regular assignments. But from July onward, the word "over-time" started appearing on most pages of his diary. On October 20, Walt asked Ferdinand to create the *Snow White* comic strip. This seems to have been the straw that broke the camel's back, and just nine days later an exhausted Horvath announced to Walt that he would quit. The meeting between the two men, only two months before the opening of *Snow White*, at a time when Walt was under intense pressure, did not go well. This time around, Walt and Ferdinand parted on bad terms.⁶⁴

Still, on December 22, 1937, the day after *Snow White's* triumphant opening, Horvath sent Walt a telegram which read: "Congratulations despite all. Fred Horvath."⁶⁵

A few months later, on May 3, 1938, Ferdinand reached out again to Walt, this time with a much humbler tone:

Dear Walt,

Skipping preliminaries of dreary hard luck stories I take the liberty, and also a short cut, to ask you whether you would be kind enough to give me a personal recommendation to Hal Roach, or rather still to Harold Lloyd, where I would like to get a tryout as a physical and also a line gag man.

In anticipation for such possible opening I already have prepared dozens of gag ideas and situations that would lend themselves for adaptation and further development, especially for those types of pictures in which Harold Lloyd excels.

No doubt that even in the professional circles you are regarded as the final arbiter to pass judgment on comedy and humor; therefore a recommendation coming from you (should you care to do so) would be of greatest possible assistance to me.

I would greatly value your kind help and advice, and I would appreciate nothing more if you granted me an interview to advise me on this subject. I realize this is asking a lot from a man as busy as you are, but I am gambling that this letter might happen to reach you between two scowls.

Hoping for the right timing,

Yours cordially,

Ferdinand Horvath⁶⁶

Walt decided to help, but the Harold Lloyd job did not materialize.⁶⁷ With no better option, Ferdinand joined the animation studio Screen Gems on May 31, 1938, and handled layout, miniature models, and character design for all of the ongoing projects. By the new year, however, he was out of work again and, a few months later, hoping that the dust had settled, he decided to try his luck at Disney again.⁶⁸ On March 4, 1939, he wrote to Walt one of his most fascinating and moving letters:

Dear Walt,

Today I have submitted samples, and have applied through the regular channels for reemployment at the studio. Would I be an old Pharisee now, I would tear my business suit and mumble forgiveness for all my sins in the past against art, against efficiency experts, and against little men who could talk so much and say so little.

However, in all fairness, I will take some of the blame that led to conditions that again compel me to seek you out, and to put up the matter once more to you.

Regrettable as the turmoil became as *Snow White* neared its completion, I can now see in retrospect that that could hardly be avoided. At all events, the nervous tension, and

strain, the continuous forcing and prodding of the mind to produce and to create, were just a trifle too much for me—and I cracked. I crawled out, before I had to be carried out. It took about five months till the fog cleared sufficiently for my brain to think of going to work again (Not quite!—you might say by the time you read these lines).

So, this is not an excuse, but it will help to explain matters. I do not expect to reveal startling axioms when I say that if you hired somebody to whom it is rather natural to be whimsical, abstract, bizarre—a person who is able to capture the flight of thought, and to project seeming absurdities in a halfway practical form on paper—you wouldn't expect him to be a well-balanced, even-tempered, cool-headed type. Still, you wouldn't think of locking him up, or out, for he might be useful in rushing in, where fair haired angels would fear to tread. You simply can't live part time in borderland and then be perfectly normal the rest of the time.

This work naturally does require special moods: you have to detach yourself from surroundings should these not be congenial at the moment—you are apt to become high-strung. Naturally, no preferential treatment expected, though appreciation would be sincere. Still, in that high-g geared, explosive but fertile atmosphere that undoubtedly is so characteristic of your studio, I do believe that such occurrences are to be contended with, but let's hope on rare occasions.

And so, may I assure you that while I don't claim to have become a changed man, I have learned while I was away that there might be now and then something in another fellow's point of view, also. Therefore, for practical reasons I promise not to tread on anybody's toes, nor bump anybody when coming in contact with your mortals. That is of course only if you let me work on some of your projects which sound more than intriguing.

To you, Walt, with respectful cordiality.⁶⁹



Two Christmas cards designed by Horvath.
Courtesy: Martin Collins.

Unfortunately, Walt was not ready to hire Ferdinand a third time. Personnel manager Paul Hopkins answered him on March 14, 1939:

Dear Ferdinand,

As is the necessary routine in every case, Walt has turned your application over to this office for thorough investigation and final decision.

As you might have gathered through talking to some of the boys, although certain phases of production are functioning normally right now, others are rather inactive due chiefly to the particular phase of production on the features. Because of this we have been unable to find any department where an opening exists at this time. We sincerely regret that the situation is not otherwise.⁷⁰

In 1940 and 1941, for a short while, Ferdinand sculpted some characters for George Pal's *Puppetoons*.⁷¹ By mid-1941 he was still struggling to find stable employment and was barely making ends meet with freelance assignments, which pushed him to make one last, desperate attempt to return to Disney. But that letter met with the same reply. The door was shut for him at the Studio. Horvath had cast himself out of Paradise.

AWAY FROM PARADISE

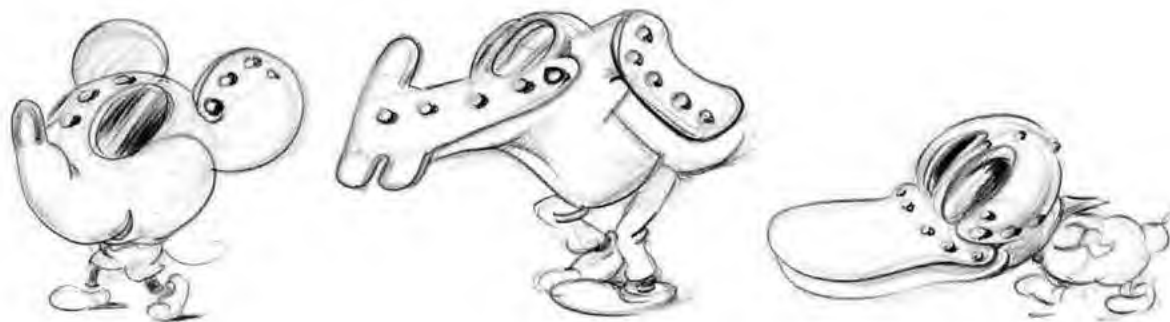
On May 4, 1942, thanks to a friend at Cal Tech, Dr. Theodore von Kármán, Ferdinand managed to find a job as an illustrator and tool designer at North American Aviation, before moving on to Hughes Aircraft Company.⁷²

After the war, Ferdinand and Elly took off for many years of vagabond travel and lived in London, Spain, France, Berlin, etc. He painted and sold his art as they went. They lived like true bohemians. The couple was so much in love, however, that life's struggles seemed very much bearable. They eventually returned to California and moved to Temecula, then much later to Hemet, after having spent a few years in between in Putney, Vermont. Ferdinand, still very creative, sculpted a lot and with Elly launched a small mail order business that sold wooden toys, chess pieces, birdhouses, and other items developed by Horvath. Finances remained extremely tight, and the couple only managed to make ends meet through Elly's resourcefulness.⁷³

Ferdinand Horvath died of a stroke on November 11, 1973. His entire life could have been a novel ... or a Hollywood movie.



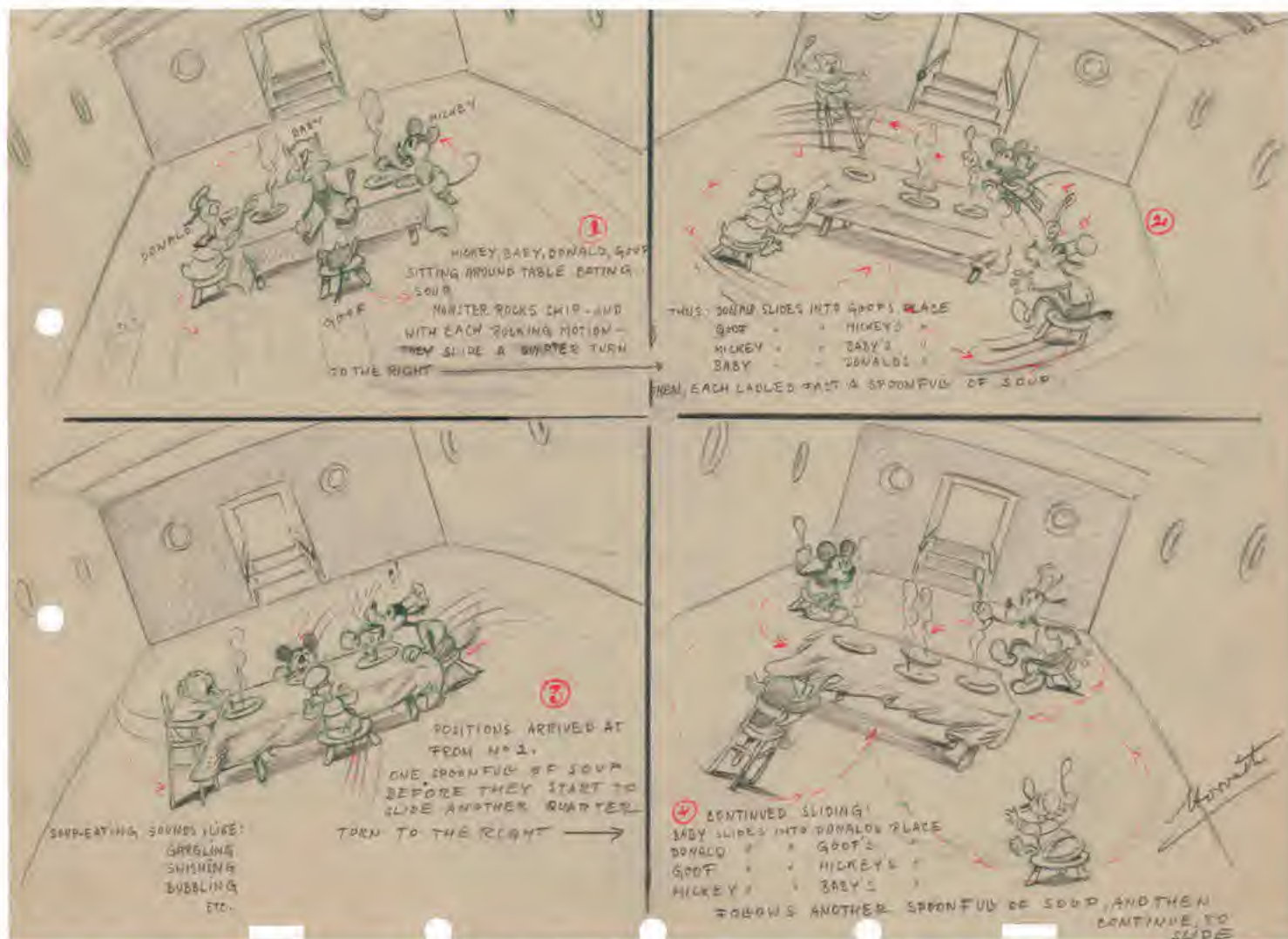
THE EXPEDITION



Storyboard drawing for the abandoned short Mickey's Sea Monster (1935). The project is mentioned on May 11, 1935 in Horvath's diary as "Sea Serpent."

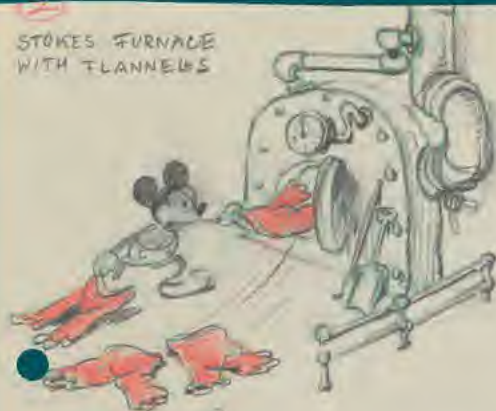


Gag ideas for Mickey's Sea Monster.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Gag ideas for Mickey's Sea Monster.

STOKES FURNACE
WITH FLANNELS



MICKEY TAKES RED FLANNELS
OFF CLOTHES-LINE
IN SHIP'S HOLD.



3. SMOKE IS BLACK BEFORE
MICKEY PUTS RED PANTS
ON FIRE.



4. BY NOW MICKEY HAS
PUT RED PANTS INTO
FIRE (SEA-MONSTER
TAKES ANOTHER
PUFF)
(DO NOT REVEAL RED IMAGE YET.
IT SHOULD COME AS A SURPRISE
TO THE AUDIENCE & THE
MONSTER.)



5. RED PANTS WILL
TURN BLACK SMOKE
RED. "PANT-L-MIXTURE"
SMOKE DOES NOT AGREE
WITH MONSTER.

H.





MICKY & CREW
RETURNING WITH CAPTURED
SEA-MONSTER.

(SEA MONSTER BLOWING MADLY
THEREBY FLYING SAILS.
GOOF POURING WATER ON ROAD, TO MAKE SHIP GO.)



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character designs for the sea serpent in Mickey's Sea Monster. Courtesy Disney's Animation Research Library, the Walt Disney Archives, and Hake's Americana and Collectibles.



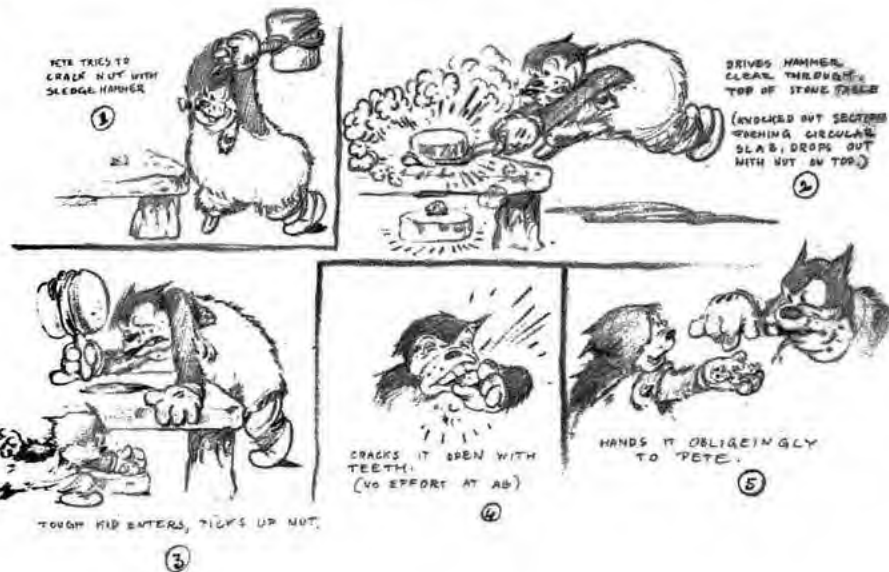
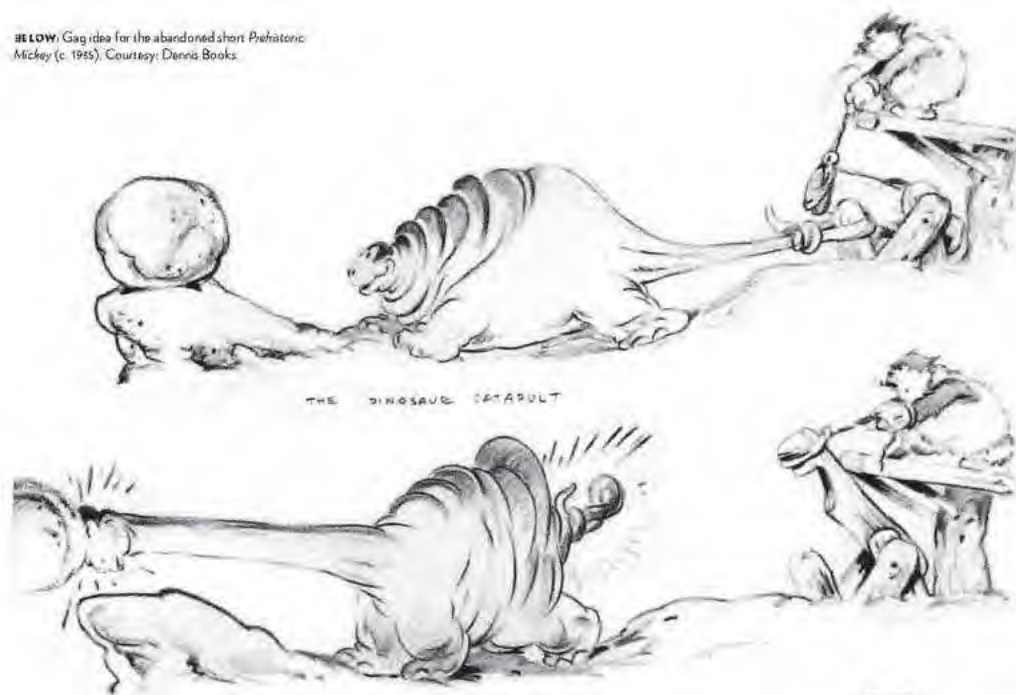


ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character designs for the sea serpent in *Mickey's Sea Monster*. Horvath's concept ideas for the monster and his kid were almost endless.



SEA MONSTER BABY

BELOW: Gag idea for the abandoned short *Prehistoric Mickey* (c. 1935). Courtesy: Dennis Books.



RIGHT: Storyboard drawings for the abandoned short *Prehistoric Mickey* (c. 1935).



Character studies for the short *The Cookie Carnival* (1935).



Storyboard drawing for the abandoned short *Mickey's Toothache* (1935). The project is mentioned on April 8, 1935 in Horvath's diary as *Jumping Toothache*.



Character studies and gag ideas for Mickey's Tooth-ache, including Pegleg Pete as the mad dentist.



BRIDGE
WORK
OUR
SPECIALTY
WE
ALSO
BUILD
VIADUCTS.

"ONE JERK"
TOLD
DENTIST

YANK
YOU!
CALL AGAIN.

WE YANK,
YOU
YELL!

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: Gag drawings and storyboard drawings for Mickey's Toothache.





OLD KING
WISDOM
TOOTH
SCOLDS
MICKEY.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character designs for the abandoned short *Ballet des Fleurs* (1935/36), a very ambitious Silly Symphony which would have been directed by Wilfred Jackson and which later served as inspiration for some sections of "The Nutcracker Suite" sequence in *Fantasia*.

TIGER-LILY





Tree designs for *Ballet des Fleurs*.



Faps pushing
out sprouts





ABOVE: Gag drawing for the abandoned sequel to *Mickey's Follies* (1956).



ABOVE: Character designs probably created for the abandoned *Silly Symphony* *The Pawn That Became Queen* (1956). Courtesy: Heritage Auctions.



Character designs for the abandoned short *Navy Mickey* (1936)



Exterior and interior designs for the bears' house
in the abandoned short *Goldilocks and the Three
Bears* (1955 to 1957).



Character designs for *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

PETER IS AWAKENED BY
SOUND OF HAND-ORGAN

①



②

HEATS PENNY
OVER CANDLE AND
TOSSES IT OUT WINDOW



③



4



5



6

Worth

BELOW AND OPPOSITE: Gag drawings for the abandoned short *Strawbel Peter* (1936). The story was based on *Der Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffmann, a book translated in 1891 by Mark Twain as *Slovenly Peter*. The book came to Walt's attention thanks to Eleanor Roosevelt in 1934. The Disney artists never managed to turn the violent Peter into an appealing character.



PETER PUTS
DOWN PANTS
ON DOG



BITTER REVENGE IS
SWEET
HORVATH





Storyboard drawings for the *Silly Symphony Three*
Blind Mouseketeers (1936)



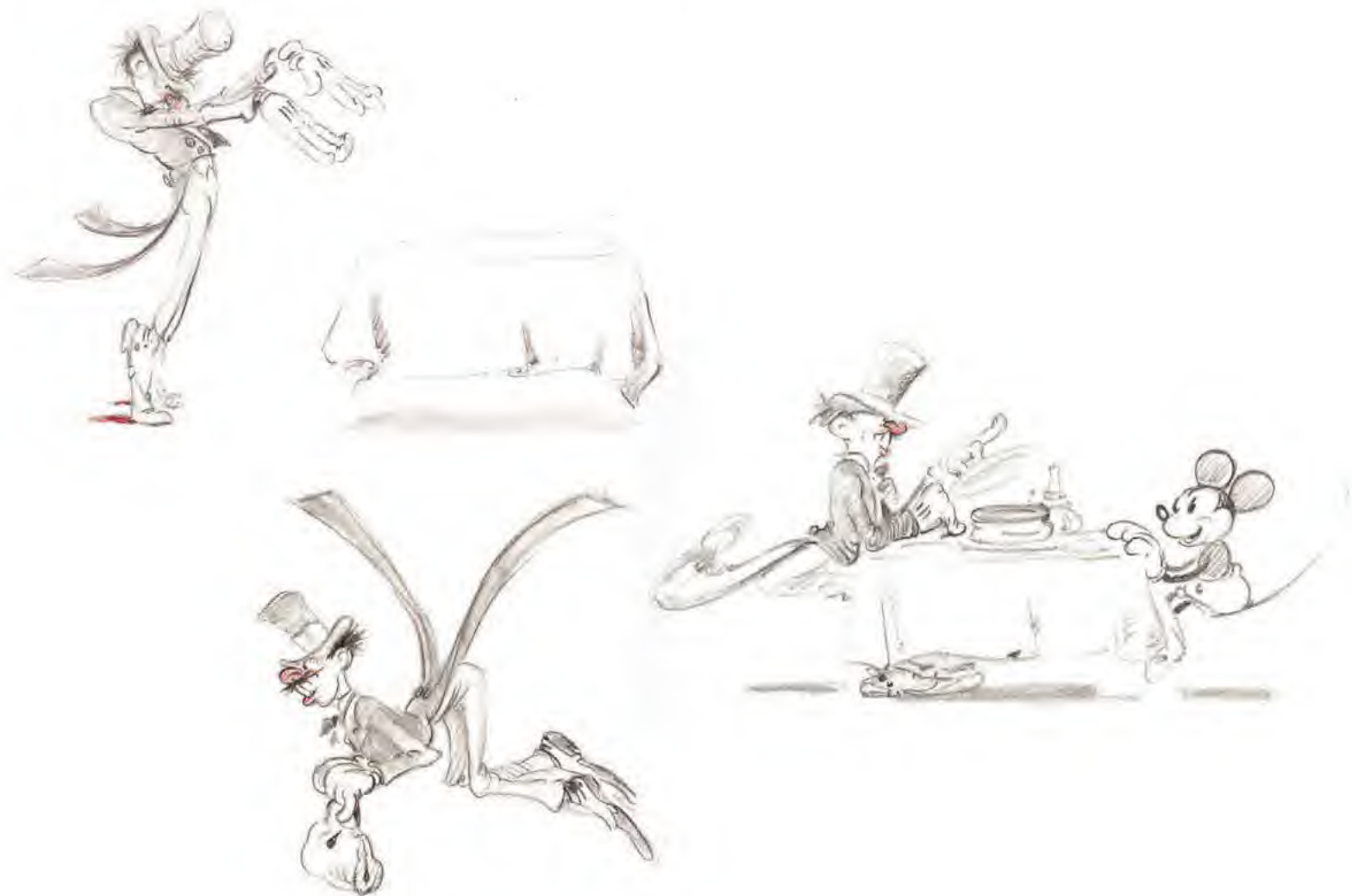
Character designs created for the *Silly Symphony* *Elmer Elephant* (1936) or its abandoned sequel *Timid Elmer* (1937). Courtesy: Dennis Books and Disney's Animation Research Library.



Four Dumb Doves tap dance.
 Different size underphones produce
 desired xylophone effect



ABOVE: Gag ideas for the abandoned short
Santa Claus Symphony (1957).



ABOVE: Gag ideas for the short *Magician Mickey* (1927). Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum.



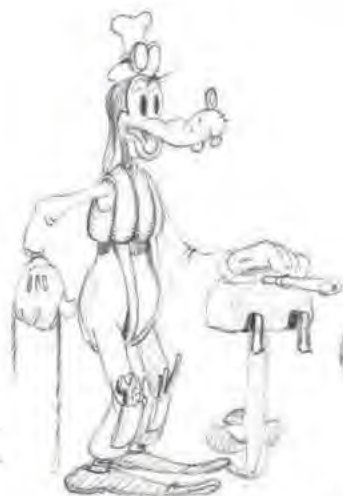
OPENING SCENE.
JUNGLE ANIMALS IN TREE TOPS.
GOING TO LEFT.



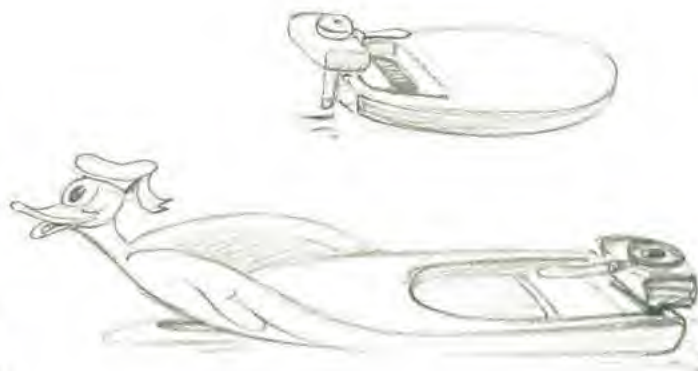
ABOVE: Storyboard drawings for the abandoned short *Jungle Mickey* (1937). Horvath mentioned this project in his diary on May 26, 1937, as "Mickey and the Pigmies."

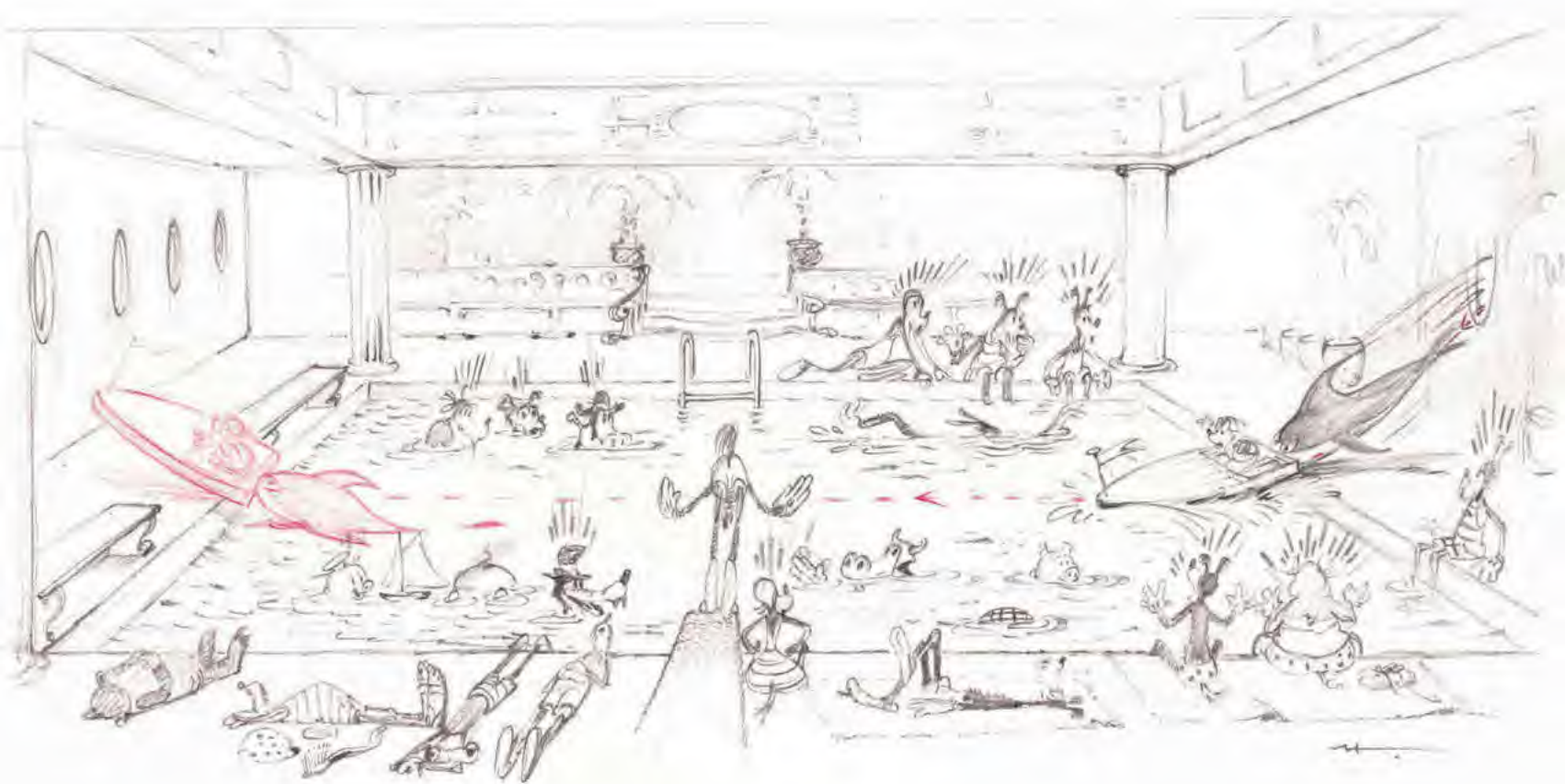


ABOVE: Storyboard drawings for the abandoned short *Jungle Mickey* (1937). Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum.

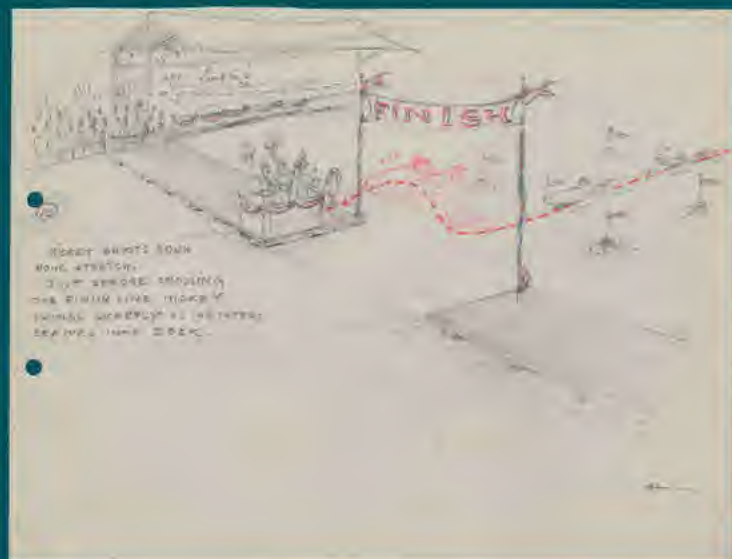


ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character and boat designs for the abandoned short *Outboard Race* (1957).





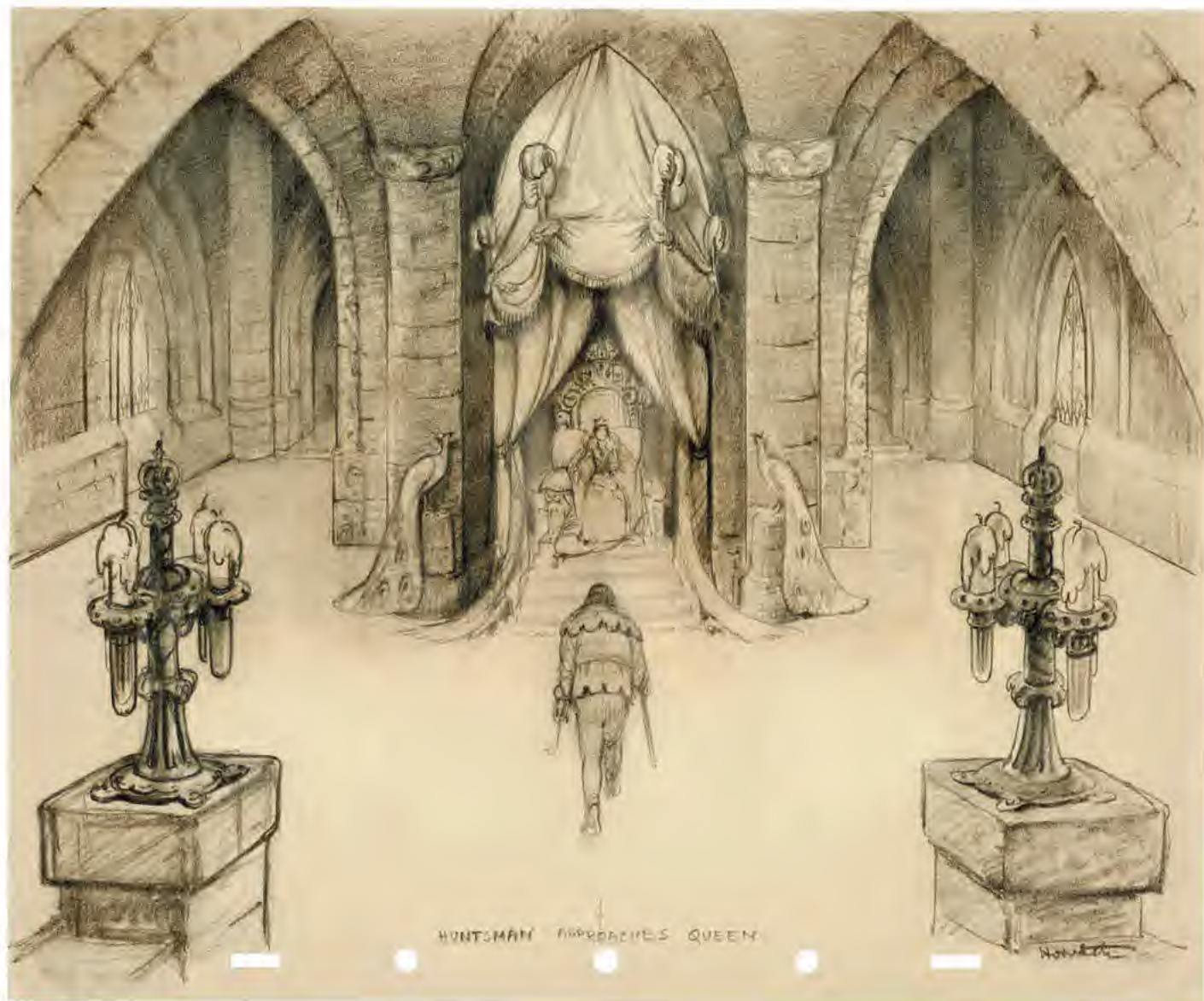
Concept drawing for *Outboard Race*.



ABOVE: Storyboard drawings for *Outboard Race*.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Outdoor and indoor studies for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).



HUNSMAN APPROACHES QUEEN



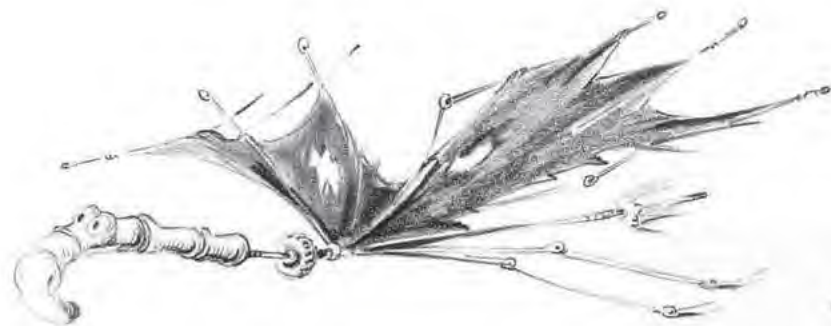


OPPOSITE: Character studies for *The Fox Hunt* (1958), a short that was released after Horvath left Disney. Courtesy: Hakei Americana & Collectibles

ABOVE: Storyboard drawing for the short *Merbabies* (1958), a short also released after Horvath had left Disney. Courtesy: Hentage Auctions.



Storyboard drawings for *The Practical Pig* (1989).
Courtesy: Hake's Americana & Collectibles.



UMBRELLA BIRD.

TIGER-BIRD LAYS STRIPED EGGS,
THEN CROWS
LIKE ROOSTER



Character studies for Alice in Wonderland.
Courtesy: Matt Crandall.



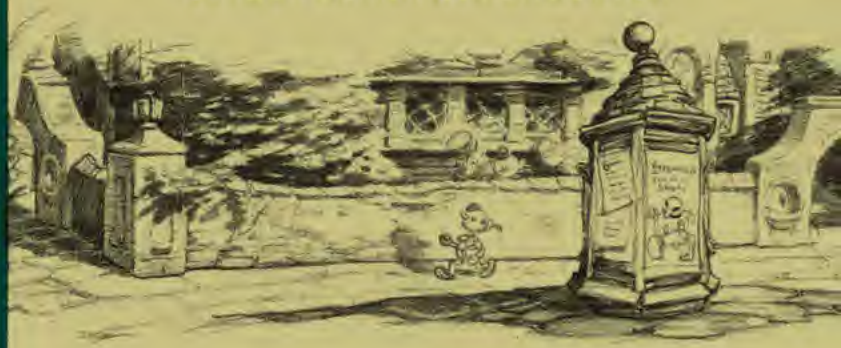


3

GUSTAF TENGREN

"They invited Gustaf Tenggren to come in and make key sketches [for Pinocchio]. Which he did, and we loved those sketches. He was a European and those were things he knew as a boy—he knew those places."

—LAYOUT ARTIST KEN ANDERSON





LIKE ALBERT HURTER and Ferdinand Horvath, Gustaf Tenggren came from Europe. Like Horvath (and, to a much lesser extent, Hurter) he had worked on book illustrations before joining Disney. But while the styles of Hurter and Horvath were definitely “cartoony,” Tenggren was inspired by the formal beauty of some of the best Victorian-era children’s illustrators, such as Arthur Rackham and John Bauer. And, unlike Hurter and Horvath, Tenggren was already quite famous when he joined Walt’s studio on April 9, 1936.

THE ARTHUR RACKHAM OF SWEDEN

“I was born [on November 3, 1896] in Mågå Socken [Sweden], in the home of my paternal grandparents,” recalled Gustaf in the autobiography he wrote for the book *More Junior Authors*:

My family lived in Gothenburg, Sweden, where I attended school with my brother and four sisters. Summers were happily spent in the country, tagging along with my grandfather, who was a woodcarver and painter, and also a fine companion for a small boy. I never tired of watching him carve or mix the colors he used when commissioned to decorate, with typical primitive designs, churches and public buildings in the community.

Aware of my keen interest in drawing, a kind and understanding teacher, Anton Kellner, provided stuffed animals and other interesting subjects from which to draw and paint. When I was thirteen I passed a scholarship test in art and enrolled in evening classes. The following year I received a three-year scholarship and became a full-fledged art student attending day classes. This was the same school [the school for arts and crafts in Gothenburg] from which my father, also an artist, had graduated.



During vacations and spare time I painted portraits, illustrated for periodicals, but the most exciting work was painting scenery and helping to design settings for the theater in Gothenburg. Again a scholarship entitled me to three more years of study at the Valand School of Fine Arts. While still in school I was commissioned to illustrate my first book, *Bland Tomtar och Troll* [*Among Elves and Trolls*].

I arrived in the United States in the early spring of 1920⁷⁴ and settled in Cleveland. Those were busy days, drawing for *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, painting six posters weekly for Keith's Palace Theater, fashion drawings for a department store [Taylor's], and at the same time working full time for an art studio. After two years of this heavy schedule I was ready for a change and decided to try my luck in New York. For many years my studio was in this great city. Work was plentiful and during this period I illustrated a number of children's books.⁷⁵

Success and professional recognition did indeed meet Tenggren quite quickly after his move to the United States. "A cover for *Life* magazine made in April 1921, only six months after [his] arrival shows that Gustaf's self-promoting campaign was successful," explained Lars Emanuelsson, Tenggren's biographer. "Another sign of this is his first exhibition in the USA, a one-man show at Korner and Wood Company with over a dozen watercolors, some fairy tale illustrations for *Bland Tomtar och Troll* and others depicting pirate scenes often with an eye for the dramatic subject matter. In spite of some harsh criticism concerning the exotic choice of motifs, the reviewers were impressed with the artist's handicraft and many of his fellow artists praised the neophyte illustrator's work and felt he would go far in his chosen field."⁷⁶



While Tenggren's career was flourishing, however, his marriage with Anna Petersson, contracted in 1918, was floundering. Gustaf's passion for alcohol and young women was to blame. His meeting in 1922 with the nineteen-year-old Malin ("Mollie") Fröberg was the last straw. Anna filed for divorce and Gustaf married Mollie on September 21, 1927.⁷⁷

By 1923, Tenggren had moved from Cleveland to New York, and by 1936 he had established a thriving career as a magazine and children's books illustrator, working for the most prestigious magazines of the time, including *Ladies' Home Journal*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Cosmopolitan*, and illustrating dozens of children's books, including several novels of Jules Verne, *Andersen's Fairy Tales*, *Heidi*, and *The Red Fairy Book*.

OPPOSITE TOP: Gustaf Tenggren with his dog during a field trip to gather inspiration for *Bambi*. Courtesy: Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Gustaf Tenggren looking at layout drawings at the Disney Studio. Courtesy: Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center.

RIGHT: Photo of Gustaf Tenggren by Hermann Schultheis taken during a June 1928 *Bambi* field trip.

MOVING TO THE WILD WEST

In the meantime, on the West Coast, by 1936 Walt Disney faced his biggest challenge ever: the production of his first full-length animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. To tackle this daunting task he needed to build up his staff, quickly. At some point that spring, Tenggren received an attractive job offer from Disney, which he accepted. Mollie and he moved swiftly, and by April 8 they were in Los Angeles, with Gustaf starting work at the Disney Studio the next day. His trip out west had been eventful, as was recounted by artist Maurice Noble, who would later work with the Swede at Disney:

Tenggren decided to drive his car across the country from New York, where he and his wife had been living. Tenggren expected to see all the trappings of the Old West including cowboys, covered wagons, and wild Indians, impressions he had apparently gotten from movies. But, as he made his way further into the west, there were simply none to be found. Then, he happened to drive into Las Vegas, which was a relatively small community at the time, well before any gambling casinos had been established. The townsfolk were having a "Wild West Day." Women were running around in hoop skirts and other types of pioneer dress; the men were riding horses and twirling lassos in full cowboy regalia, including chaps, clicking spurs, and cowboy hats. Delighted, Tenggren, in his thick Swedish accent, exclaimed, "Now, we're really in the west!" But, much to his disappointment, when he and his wife drove out of town the following morning headed toward Los Angeles, it had all disappeared!⁷⁶

A few days later, Mollie wrote to some friends:

Here we are in California. [. . .] Gustaf received a wonderful offer from Walt Disney, the man who makes Mickey Mouse, the Three Little Pigs, etc. He is producing the fairy tale Princess Snow White for R.K.O. Productions. It is to be a full length feature, five reels, full color. Gustaf is doing a great deal of the artwork on it and also on all the other productions in progress. They are scheduled to do four more full-length features, so Gustaf will be busy for a long time.



Photo of Gustaf Tenggren by Hermann Schultheis taken during a June 1938 *Bambi* field trip.

Walt Disney has over 300 people employed at his studio. They all keep the same hours. They start work at eight in the morning, have one hour for lunch and leave at five o'clock. Gustaf has his own studio at Disney's and keeps those same hours. He is fascinated by the work and is all enthusiasm.

Until we send for our furniture, we are living at a hotel [Hotel Astor]. It is located in the heart of Los Angeles. The days seem long as I get up at six o'clock every morning with Gustaf. We have breakfast together and I often go with him to work, just as far as the Studio and then back to the hotel. This is really a happy life as this is the first time we have had a routine to live by.⁷⁹



Layout drawing by Tenggren for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Courtesy: Pierre Lambert

ONE OF A KIND

Gustaf's work on *Snow White* involved backgrounds, layout, and some color designs. The look and feel of the movie had already been established by Albert Hurter, and production was in full swing when the Swedish artist joined the Studio. But his talent was so obvious that his role soon expanded. By November 23, 1936, director Dave Hand explained to *Snow White's* background and layout men that "Tenggren is in another capacity. As I see him, he is more or less working on preliminary story, working with the different units for mood and keying of that particular sequence. He has nothing to do with preliminary work. He is

to work with the layout man of that particular unit, to assist in building the sequence. I think Tenggren has a great deal of ability along certain lines and we should use it. If we don't, we are wasting a man. [. . .] Bob [Kuwahara] at present is what we call a floater, so [are] Harold Miles and Tenggren. It is an important position. I find the units fighting for these three men."⁸⁰

Tenggren was seen as so valuable, in fact, that he was quickly offered a three-year contract by Walt with a salary of \$200 a week, quite a fortune in those days. Walt explained to Roy: "This salary is to become effective as of November 23, 1936. You may classify him as a 'Layout Artist' and 'Color Artist' and also include in his classification that he will do any work of this nature on either the shorts or features, which we may choose to have him do. He will also do any book illustrations which we may request of him. We want to make his classification as *broad* as possible."⁸¹

The Tenggrens were clearly delighted with this setup.

"Gustaf and I are living the best and happiest period of our marriage," wrote Mollie in August 1936. "This change seems heaven sent. He took a week off at the Studio and we spent the time at Santa Catalina Island. Don't we look proper on the image shots? Well, that's the way we are nowadays.

We bought a Buick Sedan recently, and over the weekends we take trips. Gustaf is sketching all the time. Sometimes we go to the beach and sometimes the mountains.

We have a beautiful view of Hollywood and the mountains from our porch. We are high up and have an excellent view. There are so many motives right here, that it keeps Gustaf busy painting."⁸²

THE INVALUABLE MAN

At Disney, aside from his work on *Snow White*, Tenggren was also busy tackling many of Disney's best shorts, including *Moth and the Flame*, the abandoned Silly Symphony *Ballet des Fleurs*, *Little Hiawatha*, and *The Old Mill*. For the last he created dozens of stunningly beautiful little mood paintings that defined the overall style of the Silly Symphony.⁸³

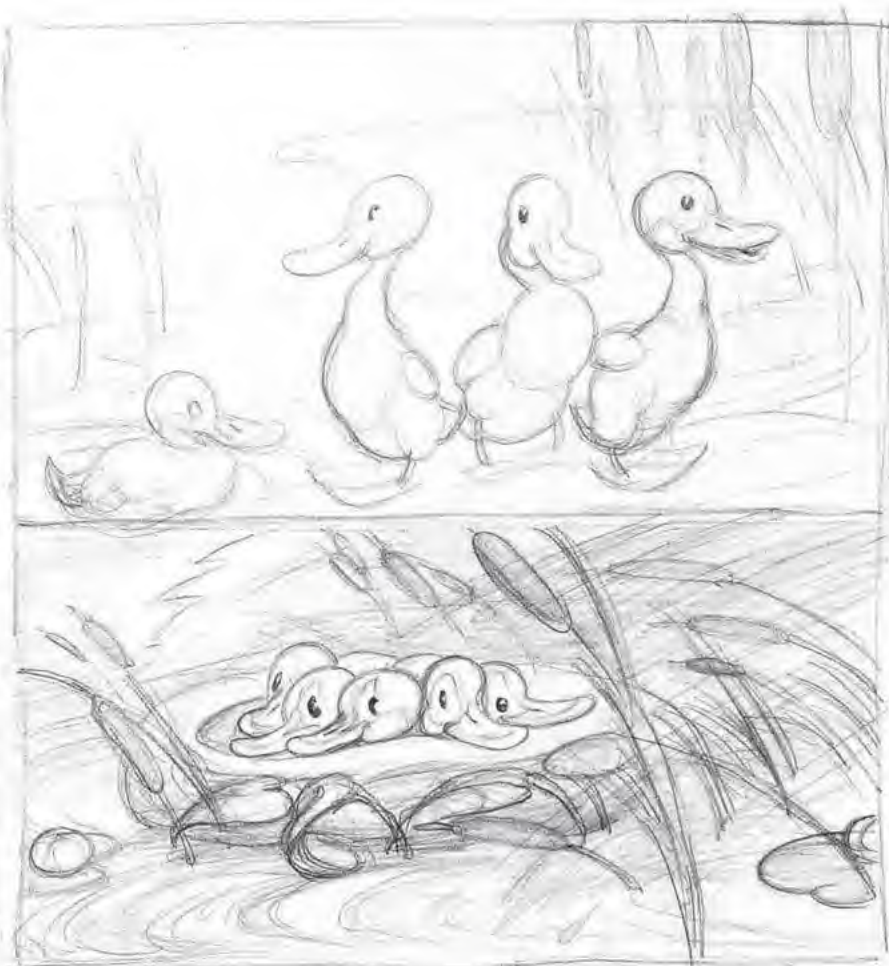
The director of *The Old Mill*, Disney veteran Wilfred Jackson, explained that "styling was done for all of Walt's feature-length cartoons that I worked on but not for most of my shorts. However, occasionally Walt felt it important to get a certain 'look' to one of the short subjects and an artist would 'style' the picture. An example is *The Old Mill* in which we tried to make the picture look as much like Tenggren's styling sketches as we were able to."⁸⁴

As if all those projects, which Tenggren worked on between 1936 and 1937, were not enough, Walt asked the artist to tackle several assignments in the Publicity Department, including the movie poster of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and the elaborate illustrations for the version of the story that appeared in the magazine *Good Housekeeping*.

In early July 1937, Walt had asked Phil Dike to recommend a member of the Background staff who might handle that project. To which Dike answered on July 9:

"I believe we are missing a bet if we don't have Tenggren handle the 'Snow White' *Good Housekeeping* page. I have talked with [layout man] Tom [Codrick] and he realizes the need for a professional illustration job. What help we could give from the Background Department would not be skilled in the character painting nor the reproduction angle. We cannot afford to pull out our best men off backgrounds because of the pressure of work. Tenggren and Bill could, I feel, sandwich this in with what they are doing at the present time—that is the color stuff."⁸⁵

Tenggren took all these new assignments in stride. In fact he seemed to have been so creative and so fast that one of his colleagues, Eric Larson, mentioned that Tenggren felt that the other Disney artists "moved too slowly for him."⁸⁶



Concept sketches by Tenggren for *The Old Mill*.
Courtesy: Heritage Auctions

THE ALOOF ARTIST

As much as *Tenggren* poured his time and creativity into his work at the Studio, he never really became part of the Disney team.

"He was not well liked as a man," confessed animator Frank Thomas.⁸⁷ "Gus was a very quiet man," added his colleague Mel Shaw. "He sat in his place there, and he did his little watercolor sketches for the backgrounds. He was very meticulous. He didn't talk much. He was the quiet type."⁸⁸

And yet, despite this apparent Nordic aloofness, Gustaf did have a sense of fun. For a start, he played chess with animator Milt Kahl, who shared his feelings of self-worth. And there were also stories of wild parties, which shocked his most puritan colleagues:

"[Artists] Jack [Miller] and Martin Provinsen, on Saturday evenings, would have a model up at [Gustaf's] house," explained Joe Grant, "and they'd all draw and drink. Martin, Jack, possibly [James] Bodrero, and a number of others around the Studio. It would be quite a party. He'd have a nude model and it was, I don't know, both esoteric and erotic. [...] We were puritans. Walt had a high moral sense, most of us did. These guys were sensational. There was talk of a few strip poker parties."⁸⁹

Bob Jones, another member of Joe Grant's Character Model Department, remembered years later an evening he spent at the Tenggrens, which exemplifies how upsetting the Swede could be to some of his more straitlaced colleagues:

I had a very disturbing experience with Gustaf Tenggren. We turned out to be real good friends and he invited my

brother and me over to his house. So we went there—it was on Los Feliz—and he had this big apartment with north light, beautiful. This room was about thirty-feet long by twenty-feet wide; a perfect art gallery type of thing but it was his living room.

And he had these big paintings, they were three by four feet, most of them, and they all were of this one model, or I'd say ninety percent of them were one model: This very luscious lady, nude, and they were just beautiful paintings, all in different poses. They were all over the place. We were surrounded by them. And then he said, "I'd like to have you meet my wife," and she came in. [...] She was a very lovely lady and, very obviously, she was the one in the paintings.

So we had a great dinner and just a delightful evening sitting around and talking; but you'd be looking at her and then you'd glance away and then you'd have to look back. [Chuckles] I couldn't wait until the evening was over. My brother and I practically fled from the place. I don't know if he did it for fun or not, but Bill said, "What'd you think?" and I said, "That was the most miserable evening I've had in my life, because it was so disturbing." [Chuckles] But he was another remarkable artist.⁹⁰

Did Gustaf realize how upsetting his behavior was to Bob and his brother? Probably not. He was clearly a stranger in a strange land.

PINOCCHIO'S MASTERPIECES

By 1938, Tenggren was hard at work on *Pinocchio*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and *Bambi*, three projects on which his impact was much greater than on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. On *Pinocchio*, every element of the movie was in one way or another influenced by his style, starting with the story itself. "We couldn't really conceive of anything that could compete with *Snow White*," explained layout artist Ken Anderson:

How could we possibly top that? It was Ben Sharpsteen's idea to do *Pinocchio*. We weren't really sold on it at first, but eventually we did get sold on the idea. They invited Gustaf Tenggren, who had already worked on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, to come in and make key sketches. Which he did, and we loved those sketches. He was a European and those were things he knew as a boy—he knew those places.

I started working with Tenggren and looking at his stuff. We wanted to make something better than we had with *Snow White*, so we needed to utilize all of our talent and everything we had, to translate to the screen what Tenggren was doing.

There was a big background of the city where Geppetto lived, with little houses and everything all over. It would fill the whole section of this living room—beautifully drawn. We had to plot how the camera would roam all over this background. When we photographed it, there would be no cuts, it'd just be moving all around all the time with the camera. It gave this wonderful picture of reality.⁹¹

Another layout artist, Ken O'Connor, was even more clearly inspired and challenged by Tenggren's striking concept paintings: "I was involved in laying out the sequence of the Red Lobster Inn (where Gideon and Foulfellow meet with the coachman). Gustaf Tenggren did some terrific sketches of the alleys and the exterior of the inn, and I worked hard to get the feeling of his drawing



into the layouts. I had this complex camera move laid out where the camera would go down an alley and around a corner and down to the inn. But it was getting too expensive in my thinking, and I had to condense it. I never did feel I caught as much of the flavor of Tenggren's sketches as I wanted to."⁹²

The kids admire the Pinocchio marionette in Geppetto's workshop. This planned sequence was later abandoned.

Many years later, in a rare interview, Tenggren, looking at some of his concept paintings, recalled a few highlights of his work on *Pinocchio*:

[Walt Disney] knew how to say, "No." The drawings would be torn up and a forest of new drawings would spring up in his face, and he would say, "No" again, louder than before. Finally, of course, he must say, "Yes." It would have to come to that in the end or there would be no picture.



A beautiful concept painting by Tenggren for *Pinocchio*.

It was hard to make Pinocchio convincing and alive, because of course he had a wooden soul. Yet here I have contrived to frighten him. He's hung in a bird cage in Stromboli's wagon, and you see these black shapes of marionettes hung all around the cage like figures on a gibbet. Yes, Pinocchio is really frightened enough to throw off splinters.

Here is a sketch of the Blue Fairy. You see, I have simplified her face for the animators. There must be a very clear outline, a perfectly definite conception of her, because those animators must pick her up and repeat her a thousand times, in different poses and actions, and never depart from her. The original conception must be very firm to make this possible.

Here is a drawing of some children looking in through the shop-window where our little wooden man Pinocchio is

exhibited for sale. Here the problem was to get the effect of glass, and I solve that by having some of the children's palms and cheeks and noses pressed right against the glass. You see, those white circles do it.

And here are rain effects, and moonlight effects, and under water effects. Here he is walking forward through the hold of a wrecked ship, and the shadows of the ribs wheel mark his progress.⁹³

The scenes featuring the children looking through the shop-window and *Pinocchio* walking underwater were to have been part of the movie but were discarded by Walt at a later stage and did not make it to the screen.

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

In parallel to *Pinocchio*, Tenggren was also working on at least two more movies: *Fantasia* and *Bambi*.

Few pieces of Tenggren's artwork from "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" in *Fantasia* seem to have survived, but the artist remembered that "the water scenes in 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice' took a lot of contriving to show the water really fluid and wet."⁹⁴

On April 13, 1938, the head of Disney's Background Department, Tom Codrick, sent a memo to Walt, which could have led to a much more fascinating role for Tenggren when it came to *Fantasia*:

In thinking about the musical feature a thought has come to my mind which seems to have many good angles to it. [...] Inasmuch as each sequence in itself is a classic and the picture as a whole should hit a higher level artistically, I would suggest that each sequence (from the background standpoint) be treated in a definite and distinct technique or style which in each case would fit the particular music and mood theme of that sequence. This, I feel, would lend a great deal to the picture and a fresher handling of background subject.

Going even further, I think it would be wise to commission such men as Covarrubias, Rockwell Kent or men of their calibre to actually do the backgrounds (or part of them to set the pace). In addition, we have at least two men within the organization, Tenggren and Miles, who I believe could each do an admirable job of handling a sequence.

This may not at first sound very practical, but I think with the proper handling, the work of these men could be applied within practical methods. Also in testing the idea with a couple of fellows, I realized that the thought alone created a tremendous stimulus to these men, and I believe it would prove such to the whole Studio. This idea would also relieve the pressure on our present background department at

a time when they would possibly be snowed under with either *Pinocchio* or *Bambi*.⁹⁵

For *Bambi*, in June 1938, Tenggren went on a long trip through the Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks to gather material,⁹⁶ and as he had done on *Pinocchio*, he elaborated a stunningly complex opening sequence, to introduce *Bambi* and his mother. "I had to work out camera angles, of course," explained Tenggren:

That is very complicated. The camera is the bird's eye. It wheels, hovers over the whole forest, descends to the top foliage, giving the impression of the total wilderness, then sinks down through. It comes closer to earth, passes big branches, all the criss-crossed obstructions, down to the forest floor, the deadfalls. And there, at the heart of things, the branches draw back—these again are camera tricks—and now we focus on that little corner of a thicket where the new-born Bambi lies close against his mother's flank.

It took weeks and weeks of preliminary forest studies to get down to that small thicket, and bring into view those first scenes where Bambi gets up on his tottering legs and takes his first steps. Disney at first perhaps hardly foresaw the complexity of the thing.⁹⁷

In fact, Walt was very much aware of how complex Tenggren's elaborate opening sequence would have been. Walt was also conscious of how time-consuming and costly was Tenggren's extremely realistic approach to backgrounds and he opted for the impressionistic style of Tyrus Wong, the artistic breakthrough that allowed the movie to become reality.

Background artist Claude Coats remembered that, before leaving Disney, Tenggren also worked on *Wind in the Willows*—a project that would be absorbed into *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* after World War II—but that Tenggren's pen-and-ink drawings didn't quite work for that movie.⁹⁸



ABOVE: A beautiful concept painting by Tenggren for *Pinocchio*. Courtesy: Philippe Videcoq

ONE MORE DISNEY PROJECT

By the end of 1938, after two and a half years at the Studio, Tenggren felt restless again. In a letter to Disney's former representative in the Nordic countries, Robert Hartman, who was trying to persuade him to work on a project of animated scientific pictures, Tenggren explained:

I am very interested in your project of making scientific color movies and would be at your disposal not only for production of scientific films but also for other animated color films, short ones as well as long ones.

I have already settled my relationship with Disney, so that I at any time can give up my work there.

Although I'm presently Disney's highest paid man, I should prefer to work more independently and have a free rein for my art and my technical film knowledge.⁹⁹

Hartman's project didn't go anywhere, and Tenggren left Disney on January 14, 1939.

After leaving Disney, Gustaf, along with Mollie, spent time in Mexico, Miami, Florida—where Gustaf worked briefly at the Fleischer studio on layouts for the animated short *Snubbed by a Snob* (1940)¹⁰⁰—and Cape Cod before settling down in Dogfish Head on Southport Island in Maine in 1943. Over the ensuing years, Gustaf's artistic style changed radically and he became one of the most famous contributors to the highly popular Little Golden Books series.¹⁰¹ In August 1946, an article in *The Film Daily* claimed that Walt Disney had asked Tenggren to come back to the Studio to work on movie adaptations of *Nils Holgersson* and of the life of Hans Christian Andersen, but the two projects were eventually shelved and Tenggren never rejoined the Studio.¹⁰²

He was, however, involved in one last "Disney" project. In 1956, the *Saturday Evening Post* was about to release the first installment of Walt's biography by Diane Disney Miller and Pete Martin. It needed a cover featuring Walt and his characters. "To execute the cover painting, the *Post* needed an artist who could accurately depict Disney's famous creations and one who could handle the quite different job of portraying the cartoonist himself." The *Post's* art editor, Ken Stuart, had long admired Tenggren's children's illustrations and he tracked him down at Dogfish Head. The resulting cover, which showed Walt riding on his train, with his most famous characters, was vintage Tenggren and a beautiful homage to Gustaf's former boss.¹⁰³

Tenggren passed away, after a full and successful life, on April 6, 1970.





OPPOSITE: A stunning concept painting for the short *Little Hiawatha* (1957). Courtesy: Alan Coats

ABOVE: The second of the two only known concept paintings by Tenggren for *Little Hiawatha* (1957). Courtesy: Pierre Lambert



Recently rediscovered character studies for the abandoned short *Ballet des Fleurs*.



The Old Mill (1937). Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum.



PAGES 144-151: Elaborate miniature design studies for the Academy Award®-winning short *The Old Mill* (1957).



START ZOOM PAN AND X-DISSOLVE TO



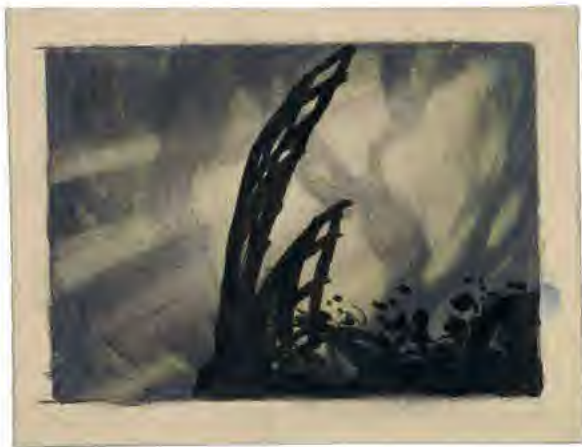
PLS. GROUND BY POND SHADOWS OF
DAYS FLY OUT OF SCENE.







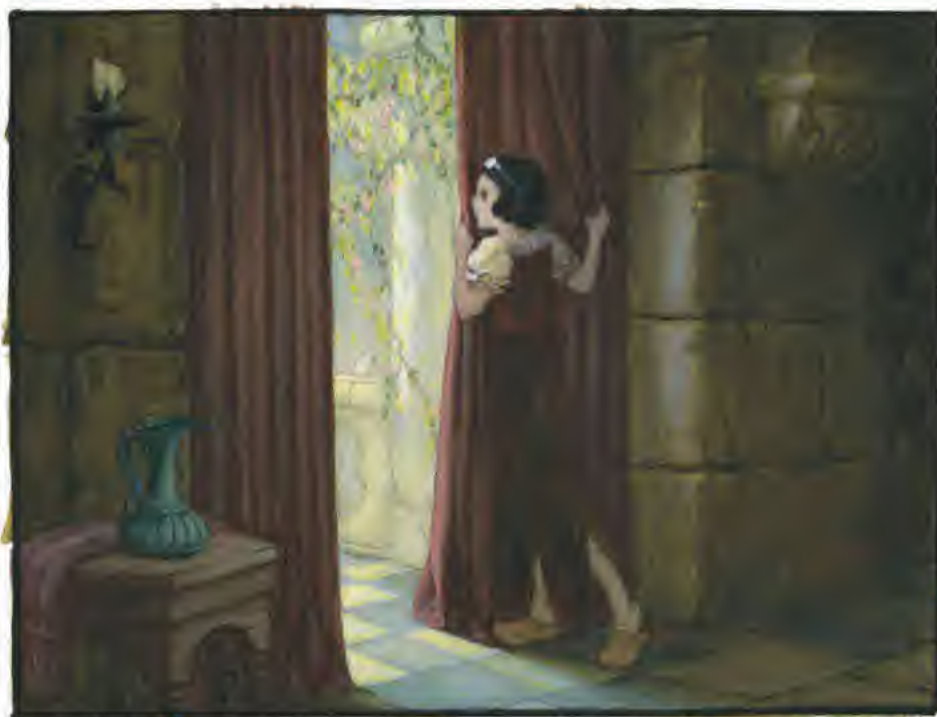












OPPOSITE AND ABOVE. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Courtesy: Wonderful World of Animation Gallery.



Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)
Courtesy: Wonderful World of Animation Gallery





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: The two only known concept paintings by Tenggren for the short *Moth and the Flame* (1998). Courtesy: Craig England.





Elaborate scene planning for *Pinocchio*.
Courtesy: Van Eaton Galleries.



Elaborate scene planning for *Pinocchio*.
Collection of the author. The color originals are yet
to be rediscovered.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Setting the European mood for *Finochio* (1940). Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum.





ABOVE: Gideon and Honest John planning their bad deeds.

TOP AND RIGHT: Pinocchio just before the fateful meeting with Gideon and Honest John.



ABOVE: Visions of hope from *Pinocchio*.



LEFT: The Blue Fairy looking on in despair while Gideon and Honest John lead Pinocchio to Stromboli. The color original of this painting is yet to be rediscovered.



♦ F 3 - SEQ. 3 ♦
PINOCCHIO MEETS FOX & CAT THE FIRST TIME
ATMOSPHERE SKETCHES



Two model sheets by Tenggren for Pinocchio's village. Courtesy: Mark Sonntag.



One of the most complex scenes in *Pinocchio* from a planning standpoint.



*Notes on
THE FIRE EATER*
The head is a modified
pear shape
hoop beard full
Jowls are heavy.
Body powerful and
solid - not fat



*Shows are
made of character*



*CONTRASTIVE
SIDES*



TEMPORARY MODEL SHEET FOR STORY DEPT. USE **PINOCCHIO**

ABOVE: Model sheet of Stromboli by Tenggren.
Courtesy: Mark Sonntag.

BOTTOM RIGHT: One of the scenes in Stromboli's
show. Courtesy: Heritage Auctions.

TOP RIGHT: Stromboli and Honest John.
Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum.





30

LEFT: Exterior of Ye Red Lobster.

BELOW: Geppetto looking for Pinocchio under the rain. The color original is yet to be rediscovered.

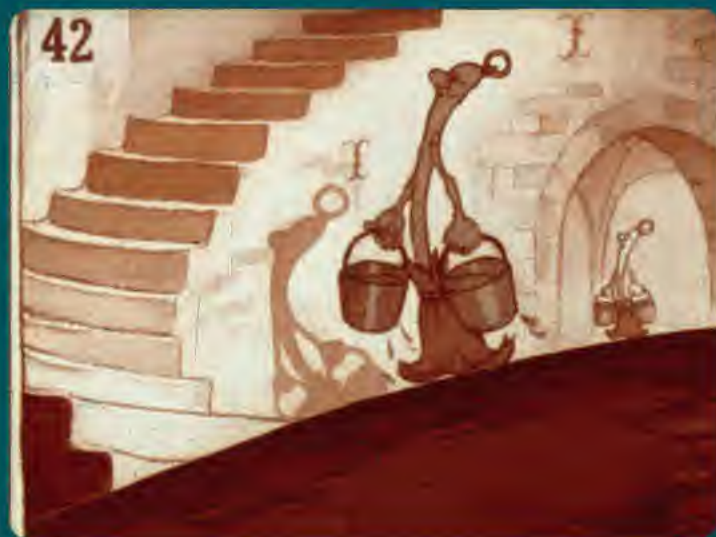




Geppetto believes that Pinocchio is dead.
Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum.



Despair of Geppetto. Courtesy: Van Eaton Galleries.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: These six pieces of concept art by Gustaf Tenggren for "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" section of *Fantasia* were discovered recently on a Leica reel. Courtesy: Van Eaton Galleries.



Tenggren's extremely detailed style for the forest in *Bambi* was impractical. Tyrus Wong's more stylized approach was eventually adopted by Walt Disney for the movie. Courtesy: Pierre Lambert.



BELOW. The elaborate opening sequence suggested by Tenggren would likewise have been much too time-consuming to produce. Courtesy: Derris Books.

RIGHT. Courtesy: Pierre Lambert.



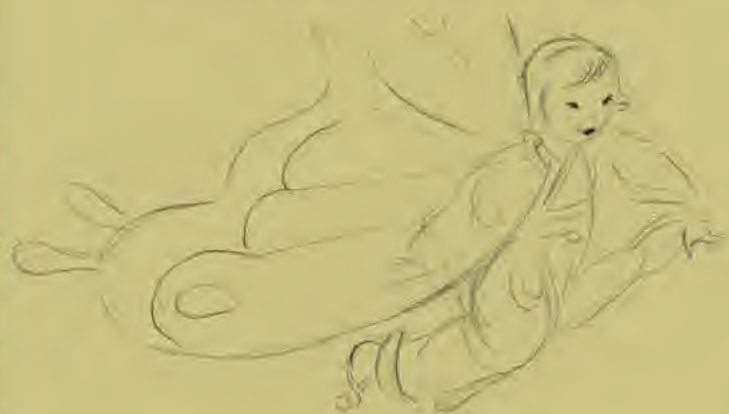




BIANCA MAJOLIE

*"If you can do so, without causing
yourself too much inconvenience,
please arrange to see me sometime.
I am only five feet tall and don't bite."*

—BIANCA MAJOLIE TO WALT DISNEY





ON FEBRUARY 23, 1940, just two weeks after the opening of *Pinocchio*, the following appeared in the *Hollywood Citizen News*:

"It is no longer news when a woman takes her place in a man's work-a-day world. But it was news when a woman artist invaded the strictly masculine stronghold of the Walt Disney Studio.

"The event took place about [five] years ago. Until that time the only girls in the Studio were the few necessary secretaries and the girls who did the inking and painting of celluloids. The girl who caused all the excitement was a young artist who, as a child, had gone to school with Walt in Chicago."¹⁰⁴

Bianca Majolie was indeed the first woman to join Disney's Story Department. Paving the way for others was a rough undertaking, but she would soon be followed by a handful of similarly remarkable women.

WALT'S FRIEND

"I was born in Rome, Italy, on September 13, 1900," explained Bianca in a letter to animation historian John Canemaker. "My Italian name was Bianca Maggioli and my French teacher Josephine Mack at McKinley changed it to Blanche Majolie. It was Walt who later changed my name to Bianca.

"Walt Disney was a lower classmate of mine at McKinley High School in Chicago in 1917. I did not know him or his friends personally and saw him only once on the day he came back to school dressed in his G.I. uniform [at the end of World War I] to say goodbye. I was graduating at mid-term, handed him my girl grad-book, and he drew pictures in it."¹⁰⁵

Seventeen years after high school, Bianca was working in New York as art director and brochure designer for the J. C. Penney Company. She had studied composition, anatomy, and painting at the Art Institute of Chicago, drawing at the Leonardo da Vinci School of Art in New York, and clay sculpture at the Art Students League in New York. In 1929 she had worked as a freelance artist for Earnshaw Publications, tackling fashion assignments, which took her to Rome, Florence, and Paris.¹⁰⁶

On April 1, 1934, after five years with J. C. Penney, she decided to send a fateful letter to the man she still remembered as a teenager:

Dear Walt Disney,

It cannot be seventeen years ago, and yet it is, since the days of McKinley High School. It seems to me that somewhere I've a girl grad-book full of little things you drew! And it seems to me that you were a rather sweet, fair haired lad of fourteen, quite eager to do nice things for people.

Bianca Majolie in 1938, climbing Mount San Jacinto near Palm Springs. Courtesy: John Canemaker.

During these years you have done so many great things, while I have remained quite humble. At any rate, you surely do not remember me in the least.

Being rather a bad artist, I've had a hand at all sorts of art and have spent the last three years being art director for a department store chain.

If you can do so, without causing yourself too much inconvenience, please arrange to see me some time. I am only five feet tall and don't bite. I have a pantomime cartoon strip that I'd like very much to market, and you might be able to give me some information, since my knowledge of the comic strip market is very limited indeed.¹⁰⁷

Walt received the letter on April 11 and answered it just three days later:

Dear friend Blanche:

I remember with great interest the year I spent at McKinley High. I also remember a very charming little girl with black eyes and black hair and a sweet personality whom I believe was Art Editor of the *McKinley Voice*.

I am sorry you don't bite, but nevertheless I should be very glad to have you drop in and see me any time at your convenience. But due to the fact that I am located in Hollywood, I am afraid that it would be quite a trip, so I might suggest that you send me, by mail, some of the comic strips that you speak of and I shall be glad to give you any information I may have regarding the comic strip market.

I am very sorry we are so widely separated and that I shall not be able to see you personally, but I would like to extend my very best wishes to you for your success.¹⁰⁸

On April 25, Bianca wrote back. The content of her letter betrays the artistic sensibility that, a few years later, would permeate her art at Disney and would leave her so emotionally exposed:

You are sweet to remember the child that I was . . . Yes, and remarkable too, since I am sure you only saw her a very few times. As I recall, she was much like your small mouse person, without any of his charm and merriment. Her chief delight was seeing Miss Sargent emerge with her traditional tray of books, usually topped by a solitary flower.

What a charming little old woman she was, do you recall? With her beautifully groomed hair, her gowns of grey taffeta, her exquisite lace necklace, and the tiny jeweled watch pinned to her bosom. She might have been the good fairy in a flowery old fashioned romance, or she might have been created expressly for the purpose of living in a doll house! I am sending you Photostats of some of my cartoon strips. They are from pencil drawings and I dare say you will see much room for improvement. I did not want to spend too much time on them because I did not know if the idea would take.¹⁰⁹

True to style, Walt's response was very honest and direct:

"I have received [. . .] the sample strips. I have looked them over and I believe they contain some very cute and clever ideas, but at the same time I do not feel they are done up in quite a professional style.

However, on the strength of the ideas alone, I have taken the liberty of writing to my friend Mr. J.V. Connolly of King Features Syndicate, asking him to look over the strips and give them consideration and, if possible, to give you an interview. [. . .]"¹¹⁰

FROM COMIC STRIPS TO STORY DRAWINGS

By June 1934, thanks to Walt, Bianca was in touch with Joseph V. Connolly, head of the sales, promotion, publicity, and advertising of King Features Syndicate, and the man who had first contacted the Disney Studio in 1929 to suggest the launch of a Mickey Mouse comic strip. Connolly expressed some interest in Bianca's strip. But they did not strike a deal.¹¹¹

"We were in the middle of the Great Depression," remembered Bianca, "and my strip was about a girl named Stella who was trying to find a job. There was always a little twist at the end and she just didn't make it. And neither did my cartoon strip, because [another strip named] 'Benny' won first place. I was thinking of taking a trip to the Orient when I thought of Walt and his L.A. cartoon studio, so I wrote him a letter [on February 11, 1935] and he replied."¹¹²

From that point on, things started moving fast. Around February 13, Walt and Bianca had lunch together at the Tam O'Shanter, one of Walt's favorite restaurants in L.A., and she showed him her portfolio. Walt offered her a position at the Studio on the spot.

In a letter dated Thursday, February 14, Bianca sent her decision:

My Dear Walt,

You cannot imagine how much I enjoyed my short visit with you, and how really delightful it was to recapture a bit of my girlhood there beneath the shade of Tam O'Shanter's wooden umbrella.

You are everything and much more than I visualized, and the really amazing thing is that you haven't changed, in spite of the terrifying eyebrow uplift, that succeeds only in arousing my merriment.

This morning I had some encouraging replies from two of the stores, but in the interim, I have definitely decided to take you up on your very generous offer of a six months' apprenticeship in your story department. If I did not appear enthusiastic, it was simply because it was a little hard to visualize the transition of working for dollars into working for love!



Grace Huntington studying the book *The Bandit Meuse and Other Tales* around the very end of her stay at Disney (she left the Studio on July 29, 1939). Courtesy: David Lejak.

I really do appreciate the opportunity you are placing before me and sincerely hope that I may have something to contribute to your studio. Perhaps after you have found a small corner for me, you will let me know when I am to come.

Imagine my amazement at finding out that I was being driven home in your car by none other than the voice of Donald Duck!¹¹³

Bianca was hired by Disney just four days later with an initial salary of \$18 a week, much lower than Horvath's \$75 or Hurter's \$85.¹¹⁴ Majolie was indeed working for love rather than for money. She had just joined Walt's most cherished purview, the heart of the Disney Studio—the very masculine Story Department.

DISNEY'S "STORY WOMEN"

DISNEY'S FIRST FEMALE STORY ARTIST

"In 1935 the Studio's atmosphere was crammed and clammy," recalled Bianca. "We worked in close quarters in an L shaped old building with a front parking lot. My close co-workers were [gag man] Roy Williams [who later became the Big Mooseketeer in the *Mickey Mouse Club*] and Walt Kelly [future author of the comic strip *Pogo*]. Being the only woman in the group, I did not enjoy the story conferences which called for action contributions of slapstick comedy gags and avoided them whenever possible."¹¹⁵

Bianca's first major artistic contribution to the Studio was her original idea for the story of *Elmer Elephant*, a short released in March 1936 whose central theme was inspired by her own difficulties to fit in.

Walt really valued Bianca's creativity and talent; but, despite his support, she had a hard time adapting to her new, entirely male environment. According to historian John Canemaker she was "like a Dresden doll thrown into a monkey cage."¹¹⁶

The storyboard sessions in which the story artists had to present their ideas in front of Walt were by far the most challenging aspect of life in the Story Department. Gags, story points, or whole sequences were often discarded to strengthen the final reels. Artists often had to swallow their egos and go back to the drafting board after having spent weeks, and sometimes months, developing a story. This pressure seemed particularly intense for Bianca as she had to deal with the change in dynamics her presence represented, along with the notes and criticism.

Bianca was the first woman hired in the Story Department, but she wasn't alone for long. A few key women soon joined her at the Studio, though even Walt had a hard time completely trusting that they would fit in. Walt valued talent tremendously, but even during his interview with the next woman to join, Grace Huntington, in March 1936, he expressed his reluctance to hire women in Story. In his mind, there were some rational reasons, typical of the era, which Grace recounted in her autobiography *Please Let Me Fly!*:

"In the first place," he told me, "it takes years to train a good story man. Then if the story man turns out to be a story girl, the chances are ten to one that she will marry and leave the Studio high and dry with all the money that had been spent on her training gone to waste as there will be nothing to show for it."

Grace also remembered that Walt "explained that he had women as inkers, painters, and stenographers, but that their training period was relatively short. He would never consider hiring a woman as an animator because when she married she would be a total loss to the Studio. However, if a girl could write, she could work at home after she married and her ideas *might* still be used by the Studio."¹¹⁷

Thankfully Walt's views—unlike those of his contemporaries—would evolve quickly on the subject as the 1930s progressed and as he gained more experience.

There was another issue that Walt mentioned to Grace, however, which was perhaps a fair warning about the environment she was about to enter:

"It is difficult for a woman to fit in this work. The men will resent you. They swear a lot. That is their relaxation. They have to relax in order to produce gags, and you can't interfere with that relaxation. If you are easily shocked or hurt, it is just going to be bad."

"Walt was right," admitted Grace. "It was going to be difficult to 'fit.' It was a big jump from my sheltered life to the business world full only of men. Not because the men resented me . . . they were nice to me, but I was strange and I knew I had to be one of them if I was going to 'stick.'"

Grace faced the same learning curve as Bianca:

I had a lot of lessons to learn. The first was to get over whatever shyness I possessed. At home I had written my ideas on paper and presented them. If they weren't accepted it was because they weren't written well. Now, after I had trained myself to write, I found out that no one at the Studio ever took time to read anything. I had to tell my ideas. In a story meeting I had to shout to be heard. I simply couldn't be shy. Then I had to lose any semblance of self-consciousness. More than tell ideas, I had to act them out. A person can't be self-conscious and act out a screwy scene for Donald Duck. Next, I had to build up my own self-confidence as no one would praise me. No one at the Studio laughed at anybody else's gags. They thought about them and then maybe they would say. "It sounds funny."¹¹⁸

A few months before hiring Grace Huntington and close to a year after hiring Bianca Majolie, on January 15, 1936, Walt wrote a memo that read:

"A thing we are sadly lacking in the Story Department is somebody who would be classed as a reader, capable of giving condensed versions of stories, which could be read in a few minutes. This person should also be capable of making adaptations to show the possibilities of stories for our use. Let's see if we can find someone to fill the spot. This person would have to be someone who knows showmanship angles, and would also have to know what we can do with a cartoon."¹¹⁹

On July 20, 1936, the Studio found the perfect candidate for the job: writer Dorothy Ann Blank.

Dorothy, a journalist by trade who had worked for *College Humor* and *Redbook*, originally moved over to the Disney Studio



to help the Disney story people use the gag files that the Studio had bought from the former publisher of the *Mickey Mouse Magazine*, Hal Horne.¹²⁰ Since Dorothy had worked for Horne, she knew the files inside out. Dorothy's role expanded quickly. She wrote story treatments of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* as well as the written adaptation of the movie for the magazine *Good Housekeeping*.¹²¹ Story artist Joe Grant remembered that he used her as the visual inspiration for the "evil" Queen.¹²² And before she left the Studio on October 31, 1939, she had also written articles for the internal Studio newsletter, *The Bulletin*, and contributed to dozens of story conferences in the late '30s for such movies as *Pinocchio* (for which she wrote one of the major story treatments), *Bambi*, and early versions of *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *Cinderella*.¹²³

From then on, the number of female hires in the Story Department rapidly increased until, by the end of the 1930s, there were six women on the roster.¹²⁴

ABOVE: Story writer Dorothy Ann Blank, whom Joe Grant used as visual inspiration for the "evil" Queen in *Snow White*.

CREATIVE SUCCESSES AND CREATIVE PRESSURE

The year 1936 must have been a particularly frustrating one for Bianca, as she worked on a long series of Silly Symphonies that ended up being discarded before they reached production stage. Along with Ferdinand Horvath she tackled the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, then worked on a Silly Symphony with an Easter theme, and on a gorgeous project called *Japanese Symphony*, which fit perfectly her delicate sensibility and for which she created her most beautiful artwork to date. But none of those projects made it to the screen.

Around the same time, she created dozens of arresting concept drawings of humanized flowers, along with Gustaf Tenggren and Ferdinand Horvath, for the abandoned project *Ballet des Fleurs*. She apparently worked so closely with Horvath on that specific cartoon that their drawing styles quickly became indistinguishable.

While these projects did not go ahead, Walt loved the subtlety of Bianca's artwork and she became story director on the short *Woodland Café*, which was released in March 1937. Two months earlier, however, on the afternoon of January 25, 1937, the pressure became too great and Bianca collapsed: "[She] had prepared some storyboards," recalled her colleague Jack Cutting. "The story meeting went badly and Walt tore them apart. Bianca went back to her room and locked herself in. Roy Williams, a colorful character and a big masculine man, said, 'We can't let this go on.' He broke the door down. Bianca was leaning over her desk, depressed. She said she couldn't take the stress and the strain anymore."¹²⁵

A few months later she was active again, contributing creative ideas in a story meeting about *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod*, and, on September 29, she was part of a story conference about *The Ugly Duckling*, a project for which she had created various concept drawings. It may also have been in 1937 that Bianca was assigned to a version of the story of *The Nativity* that would have emphasized the part played by the animals. She worked on a continuity [a rough draft of what the story could look like on the screen] and produced tiny rough sketches, but once again the story was dropped.¹²⁶

"My opinion of the time I spent at Disney calls for aid from a psychiatrist. Somehow I felt that I had wasted five years of my time and lost my Identity as an artist,"¹²⁷ Bianca would confess years later. "During my last years at Disney my sanity was saved by my evening ceramic classes with Glen Lukens at U.S.C. Glen was a great teacher, and for the first time in years I was able to complete a work of art without having it changed or torn apart."¹²⁸

Did Walt realize that Bianca was deeply unhappy at the time? Did he try to spare her from more psychological hardships? The answer is probably yes. In any event, by the end of 1937, Bianca seemed to move away from concept art and storyboard presentations and to focus instead on various peripheral assignments related to story analysis. In December 1937 she translated Colodi's original novel *Pinocchio* into English for Walt, and in May 1938 she underlined a key story flaw in a long and very perceptive memo to her boss:

Analyzing the story structure of *Pinocchio*, it seems to me that a big and basic idea is being lost sight of and subjected to less important things.

The author had in mind that a poor wooden puppet, greatly desiring to be like other boys, eventually realizes his dream. There is certainly a strong and unusual plot in that idea alone, so why not take the hint and strengthen it even further?

Let us give Pinocchio a cause to want to be like the other boys, not only because he is ridiculed, but something more tangible that he wants to possess and react to as only flesh and blood boys can. If we did not tell you on the screen that this is a marionette, how would anyone know about it? He eats like the other boys, he plays, he sings; in fact, he can do a great many things that they can't do. But what is there that they can do that he can't? We haven't concerned ourselves with that question at all, and that is a very vital weakness. The idea, for instance, that Pinocchio cannot kiss the girl of his dreams; or the idea that he realizes that he will never grow up to be a man, like the other boys, but is condemned to remain a small puppet all his life.¹²⁹

In parallel she was also working on *Bambi*, again away from the storyboards:

Simultaneously with research work on *Bambi*, I am cataloging this material and establishing a permanent record of pictorial descriptions, vital and humorous facts relating to animals we are dealing with, films, photos, etc. So that when we have finished with *Bambi* we will have collected a very valuable assortment of information which will be readily accessible to our animators, writers, etc. Where now they might have to look through ten reels of film or a dozen books to find

a specific action, description or fact, our little index cards will point to the right spot at once and save a great deal of time.

For instance, a vivid and colorful description of a forest fire, the action of the flames, the distance they leap into the air, action of the sparks, the fact that fire burns uphill faster, that the trees fall toward the hillside, when properly cataloged and accessible to the animator, gives him a chance to put in the additional touches that a story man is apt to miss out...

Possibly sometime next week I am going up to the San Diego Zoo to film a newly born fawn. We are apt to get some very valuable and cute stuff for the birth of *Bambi*.¹³⁰

In April 1938, Walt, who was getting very interested in the *Cinderella* project, asked Dorothy Ann Blank, story man Al Perkins, and Bianca to "give some thought as to how it could be adapted to our medium."¹³¹ Around the same time, Bianca also created some story sketches for an early version of *Peter Pan*.¹³²

These projects were clearly more enjoyable than the previous ones. "I was not too interested in the slapstick comedy type of cartoon," explained Bianca, "but I loved the old fairytales for which I worked on adaptations and translations, and am grateful to Disney for allowing me the time spent in the libraries to do research along these lines. It was at the L.A. Public Library that I made one of my most inspiring discoveries: the works of [Jean-] Henri Fabre, the French entomologist, whose insect world was more fantastic than any fantasy man can dream of."¹³³

Things were looking up again when Walt asked Bianca to suggest some classical music for the upcoming project *Fantasia*.



A final idea for *Japanese Symphony*; this one centering on a little Japanese girl who chases a butterfly.

"Later I was to find out that three of my favorite composers had been chosen and I was assigned to work on Tchaikovsky's music," recalled Bianca.¹³⁴ "Tchaikovsky was responsible for bringing my creativity instinct back to life and the paintings I did for the Sugar Plum Fairy sequence were my response to the music. I worked on [that] sequence, the Flower dancers, and the mushroom sequence [. . .] For the Sugar Plum Fairy sequence, Al Heath and I attempted to show how beautiful what we cannot see clearly at night can be."¹³⁵

Majolie's artistic approach did not generate a creative revolution at Disney and was certainly much less stylized than Tenggren's. But she introduced a subtlety in her motifs, and inventiveness in the use of textures and colors, that contrasted strongly with the mostly cartoony and masculine styles of Hurter and Horvath. The female Disney artists Sylvia Holland, Ethel Kulsar, and Mary Blair, who joined the Studio after Bianca, would go even further in the same direction over the following years, but Bianca had opened the way.

ALWAYS INSPIRED

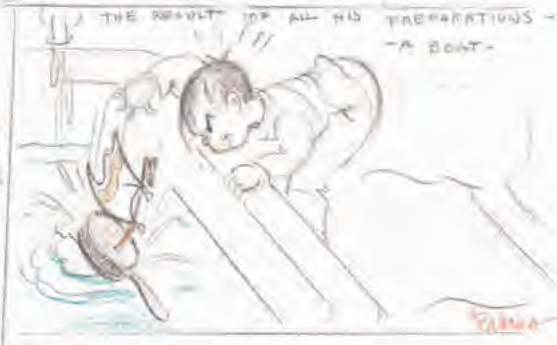
Bianca's last day at the Studio was June 1, 1940.

The years at Disney had been too intense and she was clearly burned out. "I lost interest," explained Bianca to John Canemaker years later. "I went on a long vacation. When I came back my desk was occupied. It happened abruptly. No one told me. I did run into someone in the hall who said, 'You know, you're fired.' I was so happy to break away [from Disney]."¹³⁶

After Disney, Bianca continued to work as an artist and storyteller. In 1946, while in Chicago, she did illustrations for a story titled *Cuthbert*, which was released in the book *The Children's Treasury* edited by one of her friends. Probably inspired by her discovery of the universe of entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre, she also started developing "a story about a tiny ladybird bug who tries to make it to the moon but falls into the open mouth of a yellow snapdragon where she is trapped until she is rescued by her insect friends." *Ladybird and the Moon* was abandoned in 1969 when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin made it to the moon.¹³⁷

Bianca, who also spent her post-Disney years working on private commissions for glass panels and ceramic art sculptures, married artist Carl Heilborn in 1942 and opened the Heilborn Studio Gallery, where she displayed her ceramic sculptures and promoted international artists. Ironically, the gallery was located on Hyperion Avenue, just a few blocks away from where the old Disney studio had been.¹³⁸

Bianca passed away on September 6, 1997 at the age of ninety-seven.



BLANK'S TRIP GAG!



ELEPHANT USES TRUNK TO TRIP APE —

Rough story ideas for the abandoned shorts
Straubel Peter (c. 1936) and the planned sequel
to Elmer Elephant, Timid Elmer (c. 1937).



LOVE, MARRIAGE
GROWN OLD BY THE
SEA SIDE

Rough character studies for Goldilocks, the heroine of the abandoned Silly Symphony, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (1935 to 1937).

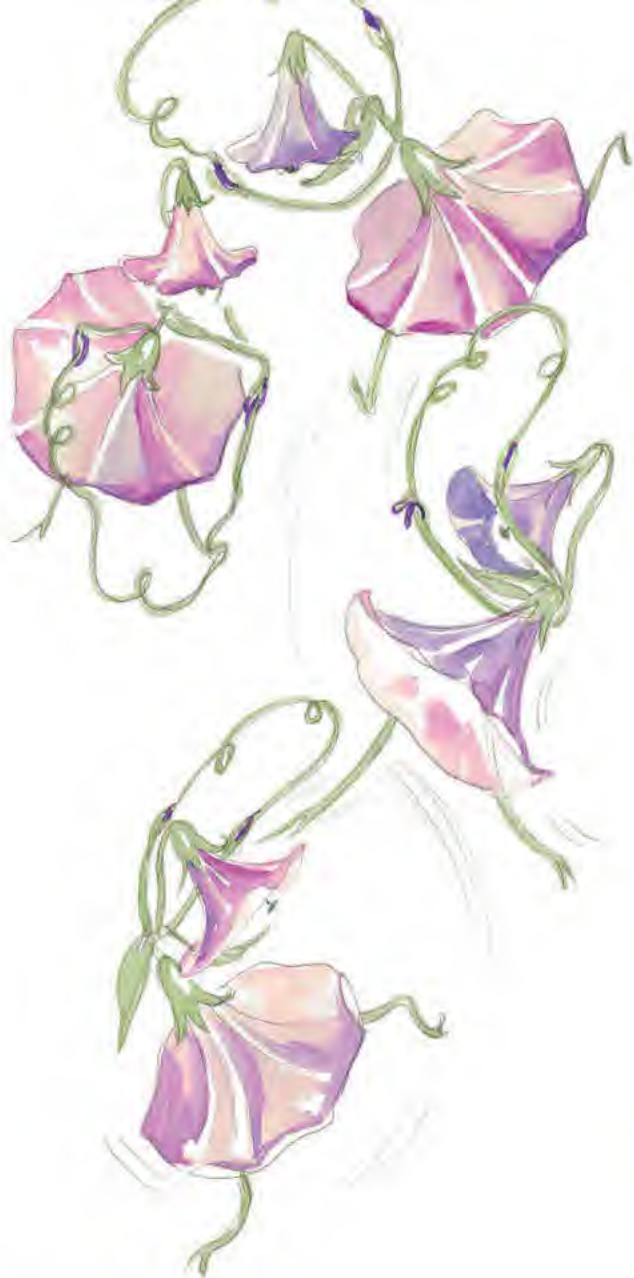


ABOVE: Two storyboard drawings for the abandoned short *Ballet des Fleurs* (1955/56)



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character designs for the abandoned short *Ballet des Fleurs* (1955/56).





THE
MORNING-GLORY
GIRLS WITH
VINE ROSES





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Character designs for the abandoned short *Ballet des Fleurs* (1955/56)



THE MOTH AND HER FLAME
HAS FOR ITS SETTING A JAPANESE GARDEN AT NIGHT.

CAST:— THE MOTH
HER FLAME - A FIREFLY
THE BAT - "A DRACULA VILLAIN"
DANCERS - OTHER MOTHS
JAPANESE LANTERNS
OTHER FIREFLIES

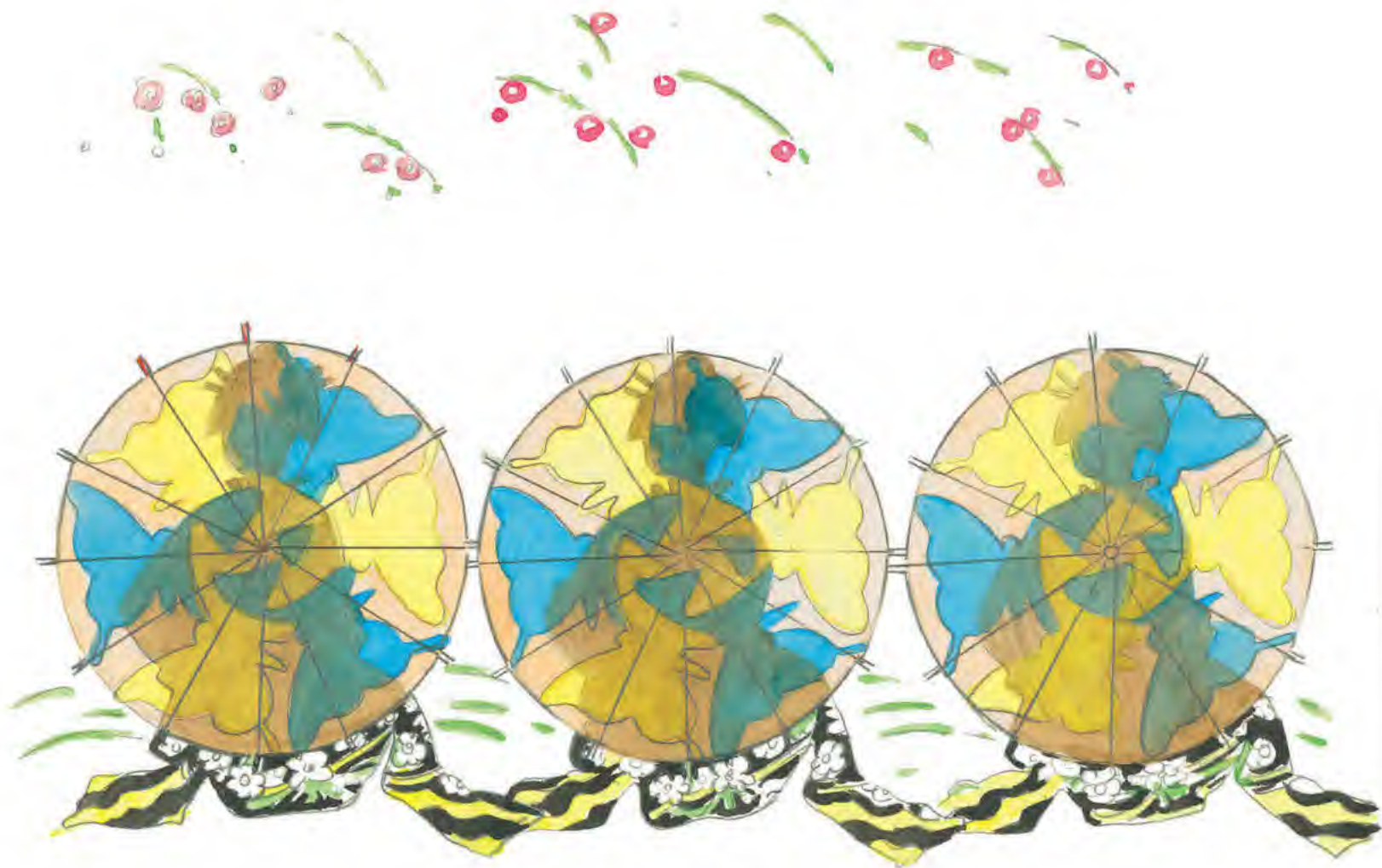
Concept drawings from 1936 for the abandoned
Silly Symphony *Japanese Symphony*.



The character of *La Melit* was formed over years
inspired by her mother and her father.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: A second set of ideas for the abandoned *Silly Symphony Japanese Symphony*, featuring geishas and their beautiful parasols.







ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: A final idea for *Japanese Symphony*; this one centering on a little Japanese girl who chases a butterfly. Bianca was also the author of the text.

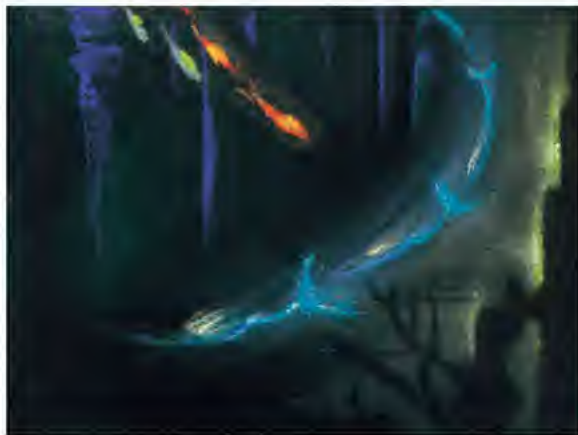
BUTTERFLY BALLET

OPEN ON LITTLE JAPANESE GIRL CHASING BUTTERFLY WITH NET. SHE RUNS IN AND OUT OF PRETTY FLORAL SETTING IN JAPANESE GARDEN. SHE FINALLY CATCHES BUTTERFLY AND BRINGS IT DOWN TO THE GROUND. THEN SHE LIES ON HER STOMACH AND WATCHES THE POOR CREATURE VAINLY STRUGGLING TO ESCAPE FROM THE NET. THE LITTLE GIRL FALLS ASLEEP. SHE DREAMS SHE IS THE BUTTERFLY.

FOLLOW WITH BUTTERFLY BALLET EXPRESSING THE JOY OF LIFE. THE MIXTURE OF BUTTERFLY AND GIRL PERSONALITY. PARALLEL HOW THEY LIKE THE SAME THINGS.

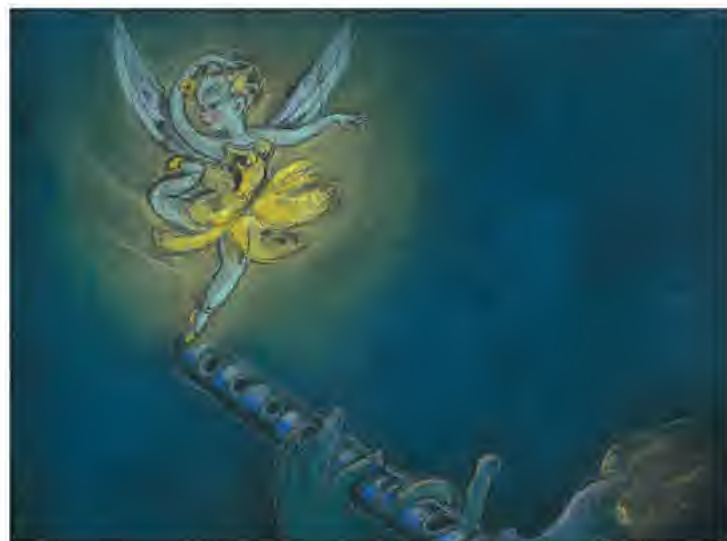
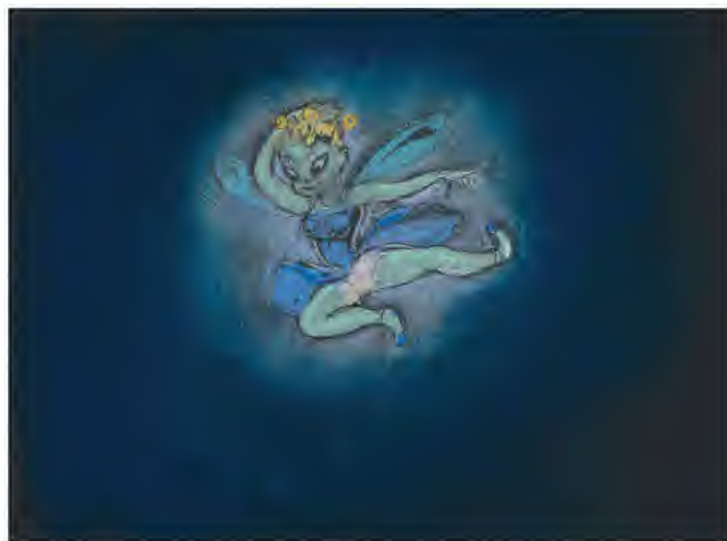
FINALLY, HOW THE LITTLE BUTTERFLY IS CAUGHT IN A SPIDER WEB, OR SOME OTHER TRAP. SHE STRUGGLES TO FREE HERSELF, AND WE CROSS DISSOLVE TO LITTLE GIRL STRUGGLING IN HER SLEEP. SHE WAKES UP, AND REALIZING THE VALUE OF THE BUTTERFLY'S LIFE, SHE GIVES IT FREEDOM.





ABOVE AND OPPOSITES: Concept ideas for the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" section of "Nutcracker Suite" in *Fantasia*.





TOP AND OPPOSITE: Early designs for the character of Tinker Bell in *Peter Pan* (1953).

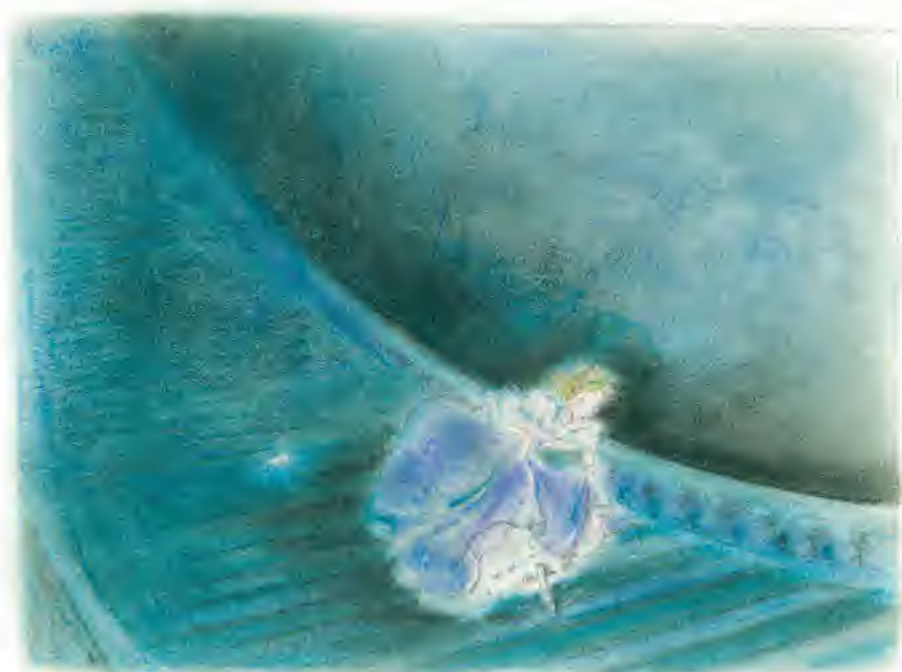
BOTTOM: Concept studies for *Peter Pan*, a project that was released after Bianca left the Studio.



LEFT: Study for one of the most dramatic sequences in *Cinderella*. While Majolie worked on the project in the '80s, the movie was only released in 1950.

RIGHT AND OPPOSITE: Two concept paintings for *Cinderella* in the style of Bianca Majolie.





BIATULA

Concept painting for *Cinderella*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dreamed of this book series for close to twenty-five years. Making it a reality is one of the great joys of my life. I knew from day one that reaching the goal would not be easy. I never thought, however, that it would mean visiting Hell and its boroughs before reaching Heaven. Many friends were kind enough to provide tremendous help along this bumpy road.

Without the serenity and utter professionalism of Chronicle Books editor Emily Haynes, I would probably have lost faith along the way. Thankfully, I did not and I am therefore able to thank the countless individuals and friends who helped me achieve this dream, starting with my wife, Rita, who lived through my bouts of exhilaration, despair, and joy throughout the whole project.

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Good historians stand on the shoulders of their predecessors; this book would not exist without the groundbreaking efforts and the exhaustive research conducted by John Canemaker for his own book *Before the Animation Begins* and without Joseph Smith, who helped me get access to John's notes preserved within the John Canemaker Animation Collection in the Fales Collection at New York University's Bobst Library. Fellow Disney historians Robin Allan, Gunnar Andreassen, Michael Barrier, Ross Care, David Gerstein, Hans Perk, and J. B. Kaufman also contributed in significant ways to the different chapters of the book. Special thanks are also owed to Hans Perk for translating the German diaries of Ferdinand

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NOTES

⁹The notion of 'concept artists' was invented fairly recently by animation historians. This broad description includes artists that were employed in their time simply as 'story men' or 'art directors.'

¹⁰Ward Kimball, interview by Thoril B. Rasmussen, February 1978, in *Walt's People: Vol. 3*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2006).

¹¹Don Hahn and Tracey Miller-Zarneke, *Before Ever After: How Walt Disney Built His Studio* (Disney Editions, 2015).

¹²Internal Disney memo from Dorothy Ann Blank to Walt Disney, October 30, 1936, Walt Disney Archives.

¹³Janet Martin, "Librarian to Walt Disney," in *Wilson Library Bulletin*, December 1939.

¹⁴Studio Research Library Accession Book, entries 236–239, Walt Disney Imagineering.

¹⁵Carol Jackson joined Disney on February 21, 1938, and replaced Helen Ludwig when she left the company on June 15, 1940. She was let go on July 11, 1941, but came back as associate librarian after World War II, on September 26, 1949, and retired on May 10, 1968. Verlaune Crall Rowen joined on September 26, 1938. Studio Research Library Accession Book, Walt Disney Imagineering.

¹⁶Martin, "Librarian to Walt Disney."

¹⁷For more information about the 1935 trip and to get a complete list of the 335 books that Walt brought back, see Didier Ghez, *Disney's Grand Tour* (Theme Park Press, 2013).

¹⁸Internal Disney memo from Walt Disney to Ted Sears and the Story Department, December 23, 1935, WDA.

¹⁹Letter from Walt Disney to Randolph Van Nostrand, April 6, 1953, WDA.

²⁰Joe Grant to John Canemaker, September 6, 1994, in *Walt's People: Vol. 14*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Theme Park Press, 2014).

²¹John Canemaker, *Before the Animation Begins: The Art and Lives of Disney Inspirational Sketch Artists* (Hyperion, 1996).

²²"Close-Up," *The Bulletin*, February 14, 1939, WDA.

²³Ship manifest, Ancestry.com.

²⁴I. Klein, "Pioneer Animated Cartoon Producer Charles R. Bowers," *Cartoonist PRC files*, March, 1975, June 1975.

²⁵Richard Huemer, interview by Joe Adamson, 1968 and 1969, in *Walt's People: Vol. 4*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2007).

²⁶Klein, "Pioneer Animated Cartoon Producer."

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ted Sears, in Albert Hurter, *He Drew as He Pleased* (Simon & Schuster, 1948).

³⁰Letter from Randolph Van Nostrand to Walt Disney, February 26, 1953, WDA.

³¹Russell Merritt and J. B. Kaufman, *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies – A Companion to the Classic Cartoon Series* (La Cineteca del Friuli, 2006); and animator draft of *The Bird Store*, collection of the author.

³²Sears in Hurter, *He Drew as He Pleased*.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Bill Cottrell, interview by Michael Barrier, December 11, 1986.

³⁵Studio Research Library Accession Book, entries 236–239, Walt Disney Imagineering.

³⁶T. Hee, interview by Milt Gray, April 1977.

³⁷Internal Disney memo from Walt Disney to Don Graham, January 10, 1936, WDA.

³⁸Jack Kinney, *Walt Disney and Other Assorted Characters* (Harmony Books, 1988).

³⁹Bill Cottrell to J. B. Kaufman on November 18, 1985. In the same unpublished interview, Cottrell mentions: "Bob Kuwahara worked, you might say, under Albert or with Albert. Bob was a young Japanese artist who was a very, very good artist. And he had the ability to draw like Albert, quite a bit, as far as copying is concerned. But he wasn't the creative artist that Albert was."

⁴⁰Bob Jones, interview by Dave Smith, June 12, 1985, in *Walt's People: Vol. 14*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Theme Park Press, 2013).

⁴¹David Hand, in *Background Meeting with Layout Men*, November 23, 1936, WDA.

⁴²Claude Coats, interview by Steve Hulett, April 1978, in *Walt's People: Vol. 6*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2008).

⁴³Richard Huemer, interview by Joe Adamson, 1968 and 1969, in *Walt's People: Vol. 4*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2007).

⁴⁴Alice in Wonderland story meeting notes, December 10, 1938, WDA.

⁴⁵Sears in *He Drew as He Pleased*. Ted actually quotes the date as 1941 instead of 1940, but this is inconsistent with the rest of Albert Hurter's life story.

⁴⁶Draft of letter by O. B. Johnston to Hugo Hurter and Ernest Hurter, November 12, 1940, WDA.

⁴⁷Ibid., November 28, 1940.

⁴⁸*Fido Bones* was also known as *Inspector Bones*. In *Reports on Stories in Process Special and Shorts*, April 3, 1944 (collection of the author), Joe Grant mentions that *Inspector Bones* is "an original story by Bill Cottrell and Joe Grant about a dog detective and his friend who solve the mystery of a missing flea circus."

⁴⁹Internal Disney memos from Joe Grant to Walt Disney, February 19, 1941, and from "The Nurse" (Hazel George) to Joe Grant, February 19, 1941, WDA.

⁵⁰Internal Disney memo from "The Nurse" (Hazel George) to Joe Grant, March 28, 1941, WDA.

⁵¹Letter from O. B. Johnston to Hugo Hurter, May 21, 1941, WDA.

⁵²In Bertha E. Mahony Miller and Elinor Whitney Field, *Contemporary Illustrators of Children's Books* (Bookshop for Boys and Girls, Women's Educational and Industrial Union, 1930).

⁵³Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Walt Disney, September 12, 1932, WDA.

⁵⁴Diaries of Ferdinand Horvath. Collection of the author. Trans. Hans Perk.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Elly Horvath, January 21, 1933. Collection of the author. Trans. Judit Young.

⁵⁷The scene was later reassigned to artist Chuck Couch.

⁵⁸Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Elly Horvath, February 6, 1933. Collection of the author. Trans. Judit Young.

⁵⁹Ibid., March 2, 1933. The John Canemaker Animation Collection, NYU. Trans. Judit Young and Peter Dudas.

⁶⁰Ibid., March 19, 1933. Collection of the author. Trans. Judit Young.

⁶¹Ibid., March 22, 1933. Collection of the author. Trans. Judit Young.

⁶²Ibid., March 24, 1933. The John Canemaker Animation Collection, NYU. Trans. Judit Young and Peter Dudas.

⁶³Ibid., June 15, 1933. Collection of the author. Trans. Judit Young; and Russell Merritt and J.B. Kaufman, *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies* (La Cineteca del Friuli, 2006).

⁶⁴Diaries of Ferdinand Horvath.

⁶⁵Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Elly Horvath, July 12, 1933. Collection of the author. Trans. Peter Dudas.

⁶⁶Letter from Walt Disney to Ferdinand Horvath, August 5, 1933. Collection of the author.

⁶⁷Diaries of Ferdinand Horvath; and letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Elly Horvath, August 23, 1933. Trans. Peter Dudas. Collection of the author.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Walt Disney, February 20, 1934. Collection of the author.

⁷⁰Diaries of Ferdinand Horvath.

⁷¹Two-page filmography of Ferdinand Horvath, Ferdinand Horvath personnel file, WDA.

⁷²Diaries of Ferdinand Horvath. The project was probably connected with a stage show at Radio City in New York.

⁷³Diaries of Ferdinand Horvath.

⁷⁴Telegram from Ferdinand Horvath to Walt Disney, December 22, 1937, WDA.

⁷⁵Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Walt Disney, May 3, 1938. Collection of the author.

⁷⁶Ibid., May 19, 1938. Collection of the author.

⁷⁷Ferdinand Horvath 1938 notebook, Ferdinand Horvath Collection, compiled by John Canemaker, in Margaret Herrick Library, Special Collections.

⁷⁸Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Walt Disney, March 4, 1939. Collection of the author.

⁷⁰ Letter from Paul Hopkins to Ferdinand Horvath, March 14, 1939. Collection of the author.

⁷¹ According to Horvath's account records (collection of the author), he worked for a few weeks at Walter Lantz's in February 1939 and at George Pal's from mid-August 1940 to July 1941.

⁷² Letter from Ferdinand Horvath to Dr. Theodore von Kármán, May 4, 1942. Papers of Theodore von Kármán, 1871–1963, California Institute of Technology, Archives.

⁷³ Elly Horvath, interview by Carol Covington, May 1988, John Canemaker Animation Collection, NYU.

⁷⁴ In reality, the Tenggrens arrived in New York on August 3, 1920.

⁷⁵ Muriel Fuller, *More Junior Authors* (H. W. Wilson, 1963).

⁷⁶ Lars Emanuelsson, "Gustaf Tenggren: A Brief Biography," *Illustration*, 6, no. 21 (Winter 2008).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Robert J. McKinnon, *Stepping into the Picture: Cartoon Designer Maurice Noble* (University Press of Mississippi, 2008).

⁷⁹ Letter from Mollie Tenggren to Mrs. Gertrud Berg, April 16, 1936. Courtesy: Lars Emanuelsson.

⁸⁰ David Hand in *Background Meeting with Layout Men*, November 23, 1936, WDA.

⁸¹ Internal Disney memo from Walt Disney to Roy Disney, November 25, 1936, WDA.

⁸² Letter from Mollie Tenggren to Mrs. Gertrud Berg, August 26, 1936. Courtesy: Lars Emanuelsson.

⁸³ There is no evidence that Gustaf Tenggren ever worked on *The Ugly Duckling*, however. The rumor was created by some ducks painted by Tenggren for *The Old Mill*, misidentified as having been painted for *The Ugly Duckling*.

⁸⁴ Letter from Wilfred Jackson to Ross Care, January 1977. Courtesy: Ross Care.

⁸⁵ J. B. Kaufman, *The Fairest One of All: The Making of Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Weldon Owen, 2012), and internal Disney memo from Phil Dike to Walt Disney, July 9, 1937, WDA.

⁸⁶ Eric Larson, interview by Robin Allan, June 19, 1985, in *Walt's People: Vol. 2*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2005).

⁸⁷ Frank Thomas, interview by Göran Bröling, 1979–1996, in *Walt's People: Vol. 8*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2009).

⁸⁸ Mel Shaw, interview by Paul F. Anderson, March 15, 1994, in *Walt's People: Vol. 12*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2012).

⁸⁹ Joe Grant, interview by John Canemaker, January 7, 1994; September 6, 1994; November 11, 1994; January 7, 1995; July 24, 1995; and April 11, 2003; in *Walt's People: Vol. 14*, Didier Ghez, ed.

⁹⁰ Bob Jones, interview by Dave Smith, June 12, 1985, in *Walt's People: Vol. 14*.

⁹¹ Ken Anderson, interview by Paul F. Anderson, 1992, in *Walt's People: Vol. 1*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Theme Park Press, 2014).

⁹² Ken O'Connor, interview by Steve Hulett, April 30, 1978, in *Walt's People: Vol. 6*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2008).

⁹³ Richard Hallett, "Man Who Made 'Bambi': Nature Is Artist's Best Friend, Says Disney Illustrator" in *Portland Sunday Telegram and Sunday Press Herald*, Portland, Maine, September 21, 1947.

Courtesy: Lars Emanuelsson.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Internal Disney memo from Tom Codrict to Walt Disney, April 13, 1938, WDA.

⁹⁶ Letter from Gustaf Tenggren to Mrs. Arthur Vorwald, June 21, 1938. Yale University Library. Beinecke Digital Collections.

⁹⁷ Richard Hallett, "Man Who Made 'Bambi': Nature Is Artist's Best Friend, Says Disney Illustrator," in *Portland Sunday Telegram and Sunday Press Herald*, Portland, Maine, September 21, 1947.

⁹⁸ Courtesy: Lars Emanuelsson. Tenggren was so excited by the *Bambi* project that an internal Disney memo from Dave Hand to Perce Pearce dated August 11, 1938, read: "In a discussion with Joe Grant, he felt that Tenggren is not working on the assignment given him on the *Pinocchio* setup. Joe asks that you speak to Tenggren and impress upon him that he should not be working on *Bambi* now but should clear up his *Pinocchio* assignment first. (Tenggren apparently likes to work on *Bambi* rather than *Pinocchio*.) Joe feels that if you will keep Tenggren on the *Pinocchio* assignment for about one week, or 40 hours, it will clear the whole situation up."

⁹⁹ Claude Coats, interview by Robin Allan, May 22, 1985, in *Walt's People: Vol. 6*.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Gustaf Tenggren to Robert Hartman, December 29, 1938, Robert S. Hartman Collection, University of Tennessee.

¹⁰¹ Graham Webb, *The Animated Film Encyclopedia* (McFarland, 2011) and Ward Kimball diaries, June 3, 1940. That day, Kimball writes: "Gustaf Tenggren working at Fleischer's in Florida, doing layouts—dotted lines to show where the character comes in and goes out."

¹⁰² Emanuelsson, "Gustaf Tenggren."

¹⁰³ "Link Rank with New Swedish Film Co.," *Film Daily*, August 5, 1946.

¹⁰⁴ "How to Build a Cover," *Take Five* 1, no. 7 (November 1956).

¹⁰⁵ "On the Distaff Side at Walt Disney's," *Hollywood Citizen News* (February 23, 1940).

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Bianca Majolie to John Canemaker, October 7, 1987. John Canemaker Animation Collection in the Fales Collection at New York University's Bobst Library (JCAC).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Blanche Majolie to Walt Disney, April 1, 1934, WDA.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Walt Disney to Blanche Majolie, April 14, 1934, WDA.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Blanche Majolie to Walt Disney, April 25, 1934, WDA.

¹¹¹ Letter from Walt Disney to Blanche Majolie, May 1, 1934, WDA.

¹¹² Letter from Blanche Majolie to Walt Disney, June 6, 1934, WDA.

¹¹³ Letter from Bianca Majolie to John Canemaker, October 7, 1987. JCAC.

¹¹⁴ Letter from Blanche Majolie to Walt Disney, February 14, 1935, WDA.

¹¹⁵ Internal Disney memo, February 18, 1935, WD

¹¹⁶ Letter from Bianca Majolie to John Canemaker, October 7, 1987. JCAC.

¹¹⁷ Canemaker, *Before the Animation Begins*.

¹¹⁸ Grace Huntington, *Please Let Me Fly!* (Lulu.com, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Grace Huntington was hired by Disney on March 30, 1936. Among other projects, she worked on a few Disney books with artist Tom Wood (including a version of *Little Hiawatha*) and contributed story ideas for *Clock Cleaners*, *The Village Smithy*, *Bambi*, and the abandoned Mickey shorts *Claudius the Bee* and *Swiss Family Robinson*. She left Disney on July 29, 1939, and spent the rest of her life piloting planes.

¹²⁰ Internal Disney memo from Walt Disney to Paul Hopkins, January 15, 1936, WDA.

¹²¹ Letter from Dorothy Ann Blank to Miss Lillian Granger, August 11, 1936, WDA.

¹²² J. B. Kaufman, *The Fairest One of All: The Making of Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Weldon Owen, 2012).

¹²³ Joe Grant Oral History, conducted by Charles Solomon, mid-1990s, Margaret Herrick Library, Special Collections.

¹²⁴ Miscellaneous story meeting notes, WDA and collection of the author.

¹²⁵ Poet Kathleen Millay joined the Story team on November 27, 1936, to work on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, but she did not boost the number of women for very long, though, since she left just six weeks later, on January 9, 1937. And three more women, Sylvia Moberly-Holland, Ethel Kulsar, and Retta Scott, also joined Disney's story team a couple of years later. Their story will be told in the next volume of this series.

¹²⁶ Jack Cutting to Robin Allan on June 26, July 2, and July 13, 1985 in *Walt's People: Vol. 9*, Didier Ghez, ed. (Xlibris, 2010). The exact date of the collapse is mentioned in the Diaries of Ferdinand Horvath.

¹²⁷ *Reports on Stories in Process Special and Shorts*, April 3, 1944. Collection of the author.

¹²⁸ Letter from Bianca Majolie to John Canemaker, October 7, 1987. JCAC.

¹²⁹ Ibid., April 20, 1988.

¹³⁰ Internal Disney memo from Bianca Majolie to Walt Disney, May 5, 1938, WDA.

¹³¹ Ibid., March 29, 1938, WDA.

¹³² Internal Disney memo from Walt Disney to Dorothy Ann Blank, Al Perkins, and Bianca Majolie, April 8, 1938, WDA.

¹³³ Bianca Majolie and Al Heath also created an early script for *Peter Pan*, dated November 28, 1939, WDA.

¹³⁴ Letter from Bianca Majolie to John Canemaker, September 18, 1987. JCAC.

¹³⁵ Ibid., May 15, 1988. JCAC.

¹³⁶ Ibid., May 3, 1988, and October 7, 1987. JCAC.

¹³⁷ Bianca Majolie, interview by John Canemaker, February 25, 1988. JCAC.

¹³⁸ Letter from Bianca Majolie to John Canemaker, October 19, 1987. JCAC.

¹³⁹ Canemaker, *Before the Animation Begins*.

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The Old Mill by Gustaf Tenggren.
Courtesy: The Walt Disney Family Museum.



Gustaf Tenggren

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